

Video Watchdog®

the Perfectionist's
Guide to
Fantastic Video

No. 20 \$5.50

Nov / Dec 1993



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Seven Versions of

BLADE RUNNER

**Universal's
CLASSIC MONSTERS!**

**The Turkish
STAR TREK!**

RARITIES • RETITLINGS • RESTORATIONS



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Fantastic Video

No. 20
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"First you dream, then you die."
—Cornell Woolrich

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Would you believe that **BLADE RUNNER: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT** is just the tip of the Tyrell Pyramid? *Paul M. Sammon* compares not two, not five, but seven extant versions of Ridley Scott's 1982 science fiction masterwork!

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Front: Sean Young as Rachael, in Warner Home Video's **BLADE RUNNER** (1982).

Inside: John Hall demonstrates that it's sometimes hard to be apparent in MCA Universal's **INVISIBLE AGENT** (1942)

Center: "There is no there there": Los Angeles, 2019 AD, from **BLADE RUNNER**.

Back: Rutger Hauer and Vidphōn booth, a scene deleted from the final cut of **BLADE RUNNER**.

KENNEL

PETER BLUMENSTOCK is the co-author of **OBSSESSION: THE FILMS OF JESS FRANCO** (available from Video Watchdog). He recently interviewed Sergio Martino for his second book, which will be devoted to Italian genre directors.

JOHN CHARLES has seen **RESERVOIR DOGS** so many times that his friends now call him "Mr. Pink." His review of the Shaw Brothers' horror/sex film **KILLER SNAKES** is scheduled to appear in **ASIAN TRASH CINEMA #5**.

G. MICHAEL DOBBS is currently preparing the 26th issue of **ANIMATO!**: The Animation Fan's Magazine, which will contain the first of a two-part, in-depth study of Fox Television's animated **BATMAN** series.

TIM LUCAS recently travelled to Los Angeles to attend yet another Mario Bava retrospective.

Next year, he plans to celebrate the 80th anniversary of Bava's birth by publishing his long-awaited **MARIO BAVA: ALL THE COLORS OF THE DARK** (Video Watchdog).

PAUL M. SAMMON wrote the definitive "Making of **BLADE RUNNER**" article for **CINEFANTASTIQUE** (Vol. 12, No. 5-6) in 1982. His "Rough Cuts" column appears regularly in **CEMETERY DANCE**, and he is the editor of two forthcoming horror fiction anthologies, **THE KING IS DEAD** and **SPLATTERPUNKS 2**.

ERIK SULEV is adjusting to married life very well, thank you. He and new wife Monica recently attended the Toronto Festival of Festivals, where they saw—among other things—**M. BUTTERFLY** (okay) and **ROMEO IS BLEEDING** (incredible).

VW THANKS:

Tom Abrams, Bender Goldman and Helper (Nicole Silverstein), C/FP Video, Joe Dante, David Del Valle, the late Philip K. Dick, Chris Dietrich, FoxVideo (Lewis Lagrone), Image Entertainment (Garrett Lee), Bill Kelley, Kino International (Laurence Lerman, Lisa Muskat), Michael Lennick, Lightstorm Entertainment (Van Ling), Magazine of the Movies (Ray Stewart), Don May, MCA Universal (Maria La Magra, Mark Simpson), Harriet Medin, MGM/UA Home Video, the gang at MST 3000, New Horizons Home Video (Michele Borkowski), 1-Shot Productions (Tim Greaves, Kevin Collins), Pioneer LDCA (Laurie Anderson), The Sci-Fi Channel (Pete Sauerbrey), Ridley Scott, Something Weird Video (Mike Vraney), Streamline Pictures Home Video (Jerry Beck), Titan Books (Robin King), Alan Upchurch, The Vestal Press Ltd. (Elaine Stuart), Video Search of Miami (Tom Weissner), The Voyager Company (Elizabeth Collumb, Catherine Gray), Warner Home Video (Debbie Russes), our contributors, distributors, subscribers, informants, and bearers of glad tidings one and all!

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THE WATCHDOG BARKS



F OUR 19 previous issues, only three have had covers picturing science fiction films. We occasionally receive letters from

readers asking why we pay so little attention to the genre, as opposed to our main menu of horror and fantasy films. The answer is simple: in our opinion, Hollywood has shown very little interest in making *true* science fiction films.

Hollywood tends to make westerns, serials, satires, morality tales, even horror and sword-and-sandal films, *in science fiction dress*—which isn't the same thing at all. Science fiction films should be experimental and adventurous, but they are more often timid and nostalgic. They are like mildly distorted mirrors meant to comment on today's world, rather than speculations about predicaments in which Humankind may someday find itself engaged. And when the odd, progressive movie does come along, it's typically remade to death until the original becomes stale by association. In the last twenty years, only a handful of genuine science fiction films have been produced: **THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH** (1976), **STALKER** (1979), **QUINTET** (1979), **THE LATHE OF HEAVEN** (1980), **BRAINSTORM** (1983), **DUNE** (1984), **BRAZIL** (1985), **THE QUIET EARTH** (1985), **ROBOCOP** (1987), and **AKIRA** (1988) come to mind. As some of these titles show, true science fiction films aren't always 100% successful in artistic or commercial terms.

Ridley Scott's **BLADE RUNNER** (1982)—based on Philip K. Dick's imaginative novel *DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?*—is one of the uncommon exceptions to this rule. **BLADE RUNNER** may couch its futuristic scenario in a generic style—namely, *film noir*—but this nostalgic approach is appropriate, because the film deals with the nature and value of memory. It also works because *film noir* and science fiction were wedded here for the first time, at least in the context of a live action film. (Animation buffs may remember Chuck Jones' "**Rocket Squad**," a 1956 Warner Bros. cartoon parody of *DRAGNET*, set in outer space; it's no longer shown on TV because Daffy Duck and Porky Pig *smoke* through the whole thing. If Warner had any

archival sense, they would have struck new 35mm prints of this prophetic curio to play in support of **BLADE RUNNER: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT**.)

In this twentieth issue of VIDEO WATCHDOG, Paul M. Sammon compares not two, not five, but *seven* extant versions of **BLADE RUNNER**. Paul is the ideal detective for this assignment; not only has he personally examined all seven **BLADEs**, but he was also present throughout the production itself as a correspondent for OMNI Magazine. Paul also managed to obtain some fresh, exclusive insights from director Ridley Scott, and the result is the definitive "Cutting Room Floor" piece our readers have been clamoring for. Read it and consider the subject "retired."

• • •

Exciting news: Next January, a new publication from VIDEO WATCHDOG will be appearing on newsstands everywhere: VIDEO WATCHDOG 1994 SPECIAL EDITION! This glossy, perfect-bound annual is the VW equivalent of a "Special Edition" laserdisc: it will be the same size as our bimonthly format, but it will contain more than 160 pages of *all-new supplementary material*! In addition to articles and information of the kind that only VW can provide, the SPECIAL EDITION will contain a valuable Source Directory (telling you how and where to find those elusive videos you're looking for) and—by popular demand—a continuation of the back issue Index begun in THE VIDEO WATCHDOG BOOK!

The SPECIAL EDITION will also serve as an annual meeting place where readers and advertisers alike can publicize their haves and wants. If there's some rare video-related item you're looking for or wish to sell, the "VWSE Classifieds" section can help you broadcast your message to Watchdogs all over the world—video fanatics just like you! Also, if you have any video-related trivia that you've been meaning to share with us, this is the time to send it—and become part of our annual "VW Infosium"!

VIDEO WATCHDOG 1994 SPECIAL EDITION isn't covered by subscriptions to VIDEO WATCHDOG. So, if you want to snag a copy of this must-have collector's item, respond to this issue's ad, or come January, pitch a tent at your favorite newsstand!

• • • • • Tim Lucas

WATCHDOG NEWS



T2SE



*Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) receives a spiritual visitation from as-yet-unborn lover Reese (Michael Biehn) in **TERMINATOR 2: SPECIAL EDITION**.*

Opposite: Malfunctioning T-1000 footwear from T2SE's exciting climax.



PIONEER SPECIAL Editions, one of Pioneer LDCA's specialty labels, has announced the November 24 release of James Cameron's **TERMINATOR 2: SPECIAL EDITION**. A laserdisc exclusive, **T2SE** will contain 12-15m of never-before-seen footage, including additional special effects sequences. The Lightstorm Entertainment production will be

available in three separate versions: widescreen and "normal television format" (read: "director's pan&scan") editions priced at \$49.95, and a special widescreen edition with special supplements for \$89.95.

The reinstated footage—first described in *VW 10:35*—includes a savage beating of Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) by sadistic interns; Michael Biehn's reprisal of

his role as "Reese" in a pivotal dream sequence; the grisly resetting of the Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenegger)'s cranial microchip from "read" to "learn" mode; Miles Bennet Dyson (Joe Morton)'s excited explanation of his fateful project; John Connor (Edward Furlong)'s comic attempts to humanize the Terminator by teaching him to smile; and additional instances of the malfunctioning of the T-1000 (Robert Patrick) during the steel mill climax. Those familiar with the original version of *T2*—and *who isn't?*—will be amazed by how much these recovered scenes clarify and contribute to the existing tapestry.

Most interestingly, Cameron has also opted to include *T2*'s "Future Coda" sequence, which shows Sarah with her grandchildren on the film's playground set in her peaceful, autumn years. According to Applause Books' *TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY—THE BOOK OF THE FILM*, there were important reasons why this scene was dropped from the final cut—it not only killed the possibility of further sequels, but actually *negated* the storyline of the first film and *T2*'s own first sequence!—so it will be interesting to see how Cameron and company have justified its resurrection.

The \$89.95 edition's supplementary section promises to be a knock-out. It will include Stan Winston's dazzling teaser trailer, the original theatrical trailers, Cameron's original treatment and script pages, storyboards,



Fuad Ramses (Mal Arnold) in BLOOD FEAST, one of three Herschell Gordon Lewis films with newly discovered outtake footage, coming soon from Something Weird Video!

photographs of sets, locations, models, and props, behind-the-scenes footage, and new interviews with Cameron and other key participants. Like FoxVideo's recent release of Cameron's special edition of *THE ABYSS* [VW 18:60-63], all three *T2SE* discs will utilize THX technologies and feature the THX laserdisc trademark. In other words, expect the very best.

With the exception of these supplementary chapters, which will contain CAV passages, all three versions of *T2SE* itself will be in the CLV format only, presumably to keep costs and side breaks to a minimum. This consideration should cause 1991's CAV boxed set of *T2*—the best-selling laserdisc of all time—to skyrocket even higher in value and collectability.

Cherry Lewis

Just when you thought Something Weird Video had finally released every surviving scrap of lost exploitation film history, SWV mogul Mike Vraney is trumpeting what may be his most uncanny discovery of all.

A couple of years ago, Vraney acquired a number of films from a collector living on a houseboat in Chicago, including the bizarre *HOW TO SUCCEED WITH GIRLS* [reviewed VW 18:20]. Among the other materials he purchased were several boxes of prints and elements from Herschell Gordon Lewis' "Gore Trilogy"—*BLOOD FEAST* (1963), *TWO THOUSAND MANIACS!* (1964), and *COLOR ME BLOOD RED* (1965)—which SWV will distribute exclusively starting next Spring. Recently, while examining these 35mm materials for quality and condition, Vraney discovered 6,000 feet (approximately 60m) of *never-before-seen outtakes from all three films!*

What was included among this material? "You know the blonde who gets killed in the bubble bath at the beginning of



BLOOD FEAST? Vraney begins. "Well, in the release version, there was no nudity; the outtakes contain *full frontal nudity*. And gore! It's hard to believe, but Herschell left a lot of blood on the cutting room floor! There's even footage of the actresses with blood all over their heads, laughing and talking to the camera! Lots of stuff with Bill Kerwin [aka Thomas Wood] handling the clipboard... it's

incredible. I mean, it could have been an hour's worth of boring dialog, but it's all good. There's even footage of Fuad Ramses getting chewed up in the garbage truck at the end of the movie!"

Obviously, this material has never been seen by the public and has not been seen by *anyone* since it was projected during the daily rushes of each production, three decades ago. Vraney plans to edit

some of the footage back into the three films, which will be sold by SWV as "Special Editions," while presenting the remaining material in laserdisc-style supplements at the end of each cassette.

"I really shouldn't be telling this to VIDEO WATCHDOG," Vraney confided, "but my first idea was to edit all this footage back into the movies and call them the 'Uncut European Versions.' But then I realized, 'Hey, that would be selling them short.' I mean, this stuff has never been seen by *anyone*!"

Lewis fans will be interested to learn that SWV has also located a reddish print of **HOW TO CARVE BEEF**, a 10m industrial short starring Bill Kerwin and Harvey Korman, which the two struggling actors used to find employment with Lewis and producer David F. Friedman in the early 1960s; it will be included on SWV's forthcoming Johnny Legend collection, **HELL AMERICAN STYLE**.

Also in Spring 1993, SWV will release Herschell Gordon Lewis' epic, two-hour vampire opus **A TASTE OF BLOOD** (1968) for the first time on home video... *letterboxed!*

Quibbles and Bits

VW contributor Bill Kelley reports that Teleworld's new TV syndication print of **HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER**—recently shown on The Sci-Fi Channel—contains the 18m *color* finale (not included on Columbia/Tristar's sell-through cassette)... Speaking of Columbia, VW Informant James Morris tells us that their cassette of Robert Rodriguez' **EL MARIACHI**, which supposedly includes the young director's award-winning short **BEDHEAD** as a bonus, actually *doesn't*; the short *is* included on the laserdisc pressing, however... **FLESH GORDON MEETS THE COSMIC CHEERLEADERS**

ERRATA

- 18:16 The score for **THE DEADLY MANTIS** was actually composed by an uncredited William Lava, not Joseph Gershenson (as credited on the print itself).
- 18:21 The monster makeup for **THE MOLE PEOPLE** was actually designed by an uncredited Jack Kevan, not Bud Westmore (as credited on the print itself).
- 19:6 **THE RITES OF DRACULA** was released by Gemstone, not United American Video as reported.
- 19:16 Pardon our Italian: the film reviewed as **MONDO BALARDO** is actually titled **MONDO BALORDO**.
- 19:19 Roger Corman directed *six* movies for AIP in 1956, not eight, as reported. **ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS** and **NOT OF THIS EARTH** were released by Allied Artists.
- 19:20 Barboura Morris' last known screen appearance was not in **DeSADE** (1969), but in Daniel Haller's **THE DUNWICH HORROR** (1970).
- 19:63 Michael Ballhaus was erroneously credited with the cinematography of **RAGING BULL**; that film was photographed by Michael Chapman.
- 19:71 A garbled sentence in our **JULES AND JIM** review should have read: "The English commentary tracks provided for **JULES AND JIM** are a marvelous grab bag..."
- 19:74 A garbled sentence in our **THE UNHOLY THREE** review should have read: "Barrymore, like Chaney, looks knowingly *on* as his daughter's lover tells her that the (criminal) father she never met is dead."
- 19:75 **KONGO** was made in 1932, not 1935 as reported.

Thanks to D. Kraft, Tim Murphy, Roy Reimer and Tom Weaver.

(reviewed as a Canadian release in VW 18:31) is now available in the US as New Horizons Home Video #NH00488U; the "unrated" tape runs 97m 24s (37s shorter than the Canadian version)... According to VW Informant Erich Mees, VW was mentioned once again on The Comedy Channel's MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000! During their recent broadcast of Roger Corman's **SWAMP DIAMONDS** (a retitling of 1955's **SWAMP WOMEN**, no less), one of the robots said: "Do you think it's possible that the VIDEO WATCHDOG people are wrong, and that Corman really is a *terrible* director?"

Retitlings

BAD GIRLS (On-Line) is Gregory Corarito's **DELINQUENT SCHOOLGIRLS** (1974), a minor sex comedy starring Michael Pataki, originally distributed by Vestron.

BLOODSILVER (Edde) is Giorgio Stegani's spaghetti western **THE GOOD DIE FIRST [Al di la della legge]** (1968), starring Lee Van Cleef and Lionel Stander. It is also available as **BEYOND THE LAW** (Imperial), in an edition which is missing 20m of the movie. The still of Van Cleef on the back of the Edde box is from **THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY** (1966)!

BOSS (Magnum) is a more politically correct title for **BOSS NIGGER** (1975), a blaxploitation western directed by Jack Arnold and starring Fred Williamson. It is also known as **THE BLACK BOUNTY KILLER**.

DEADLY COMPANION (Ace—first released by MCEG/Virgin) is

George Bloomfield's **DOUBLE NEGATIVE** (Best 1986, Best Film and Video), a Canadian thriller starring Michael Sarrazin and Susan Clark. The box for this one is a riot: the front cover features stills of supporting players John Candy (taken from **NOTHING BUT TROUBLE**) and Anthony Perkins (the **DAUGHTERS OF DARKNESS** still that appears in **THE VWBOOK**) and promotes *them* as the stars! What a team!

JACKIE CHAN'S POLICE FORCE (Cinema Group) is Jackie Chan's **POLICE STORY** (1985), a stunt packed action/comedy. This dubbed edition is 18m shorter than the original, has a different score and different outtakes during the end credits.

QUEST FOR THE MIGHTY SWORD (RCA/Columbia tape and disc) is **ATOR III: THE HOBGOBLIN** (1989), directed by Aristide Massaccesi under his "David Hills" pseudonym. The title switch was apparently done at the last minute, as Columbia sent out screeners bearing the **ATOR III** handle.

THE RESCUE (MCM) is Stuart Rosenberg's **LET'S GET HARRY** (1986), an action comedy starring Gary Busey and Robert Duvall, originally released by HBO Video. Rosenberg removed his name in favor of the Director's Guild pseudonym "Alan Smithee."

ZOMBIE 4 (Edde Entertainment) is Jess Franco's **A VIRGIN AMONG THE LIVING DEAD** (1971). The liner notes promise an uncut print, complete with violence and nudity, but this is highly unlikely.

—John Charles,
David Del Valle



ADDRESSES

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These are reliable mail order sources for some of the harder-to-find titles reviewed in this issue. They welcome your questions and catalog requests.



Video Around the World

Invisible Guys, Vanishing Gals, & Other Things Worth Seeing

A NOTE ON TIMINGS

The timings listed for the following NTSC tapes reflect only the length of the film itself, and do not include such ephemera as video company logos, FBI warnings, supplementary trailers, or MPAA ratings certificates. The only exceptions to this rule are those films in which the soundtrack is first heard while the distributor's logo is still onscreen.

USA

By Tim Lucas

ASHIK KERIB

1988, Kino on Video,
HF, \$59.95, 76m 28s

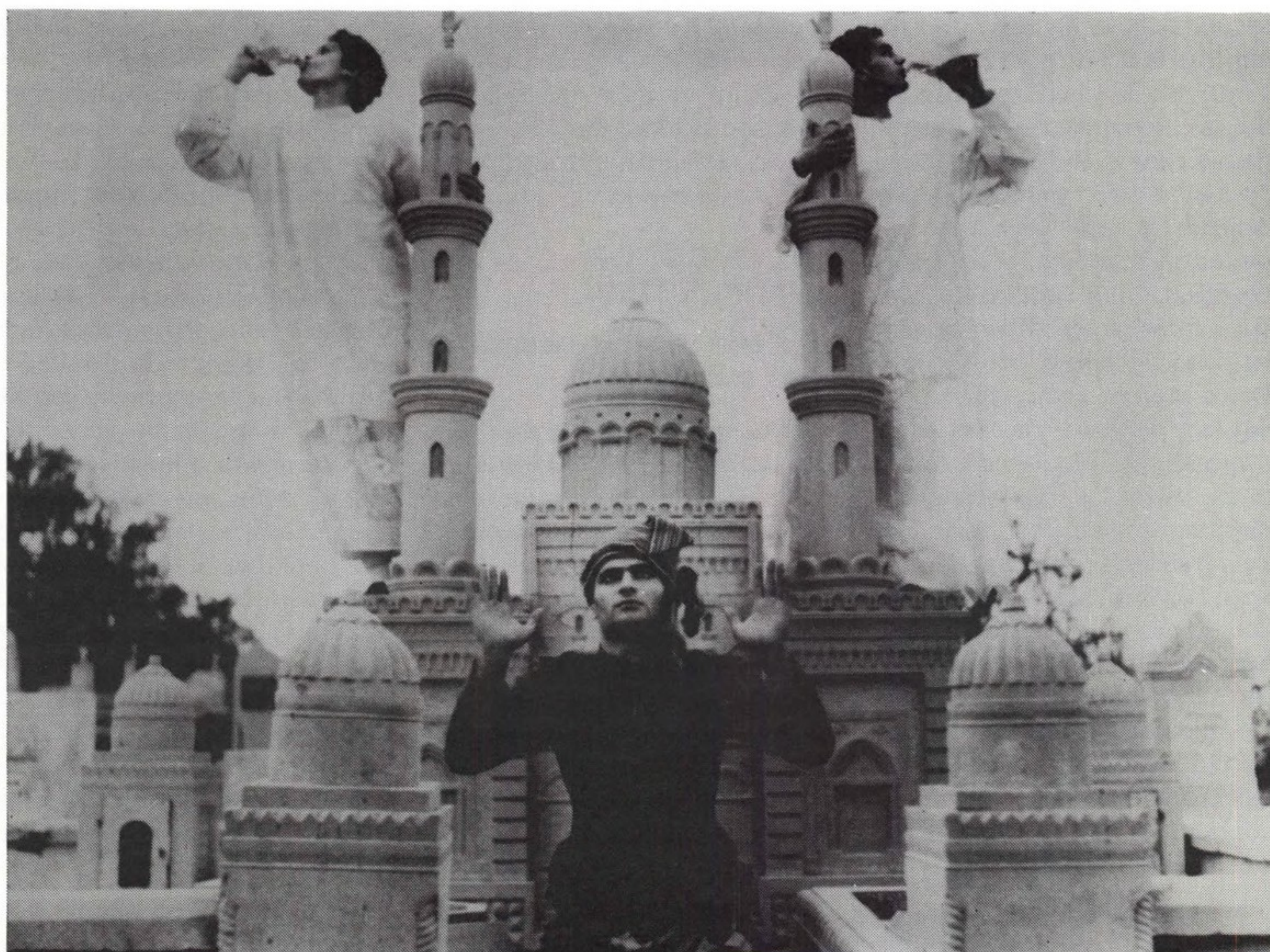
It's hard to believe that anyone could create the illusion of flight on film using nothing more than a boy, a conch shell, and a spinning globe, but that is only one of the miracles Sergei Paradzhanov (**SHADOWS OF FORGOTTEN ANCESTORS**) performs in this astounding Russian fantasy. Ashik-Kerib (Yuri Mgoyan), a poor minstrel, loves the princess Magul-Mekher (Veronica Mtonidze), but his dowry of rose petals is disdained by her boorish father. The musician banishes himself from the village for a period of 1,000 days, during which he confronts a series of mystic adversities which prove him worthy to the gods of wealth and good fortune.

Based on a fable by Mikhail Lermontov (**A HERO OF OUR TIME**), **ASHIK KERIB** sports a heady, almost non-stop, Middle Eastern score by D. Kuliev (with songs by Alim Gasimov), and Albert Yavuryan's intensely detailed, often stationary images are powerfully evocative of Byzantine

tableaux. Paradzhanov proves himself a magician capable of making us see things that aren't really there; at one point, an executioner decapitates a man and the camera cuts to a red scarf being pulled from the hollowed neck of a large squash—for a moment, he succeeds in making us "see" blood gushing from the neck of a severed head. Elsewhere, by suggesting a Persian metropolis with a series of *bas-reliefs*, he brilliantly cuts to two men positioned on a mosque-like cemetery monument to suggest two giant Angels straddling the city. But the greatest image—the one that made me say

KEY

CC	Closed Captioned
D	Digital
HF	Hi-Fi
LB	Letterboxed
LD	Laserdisc
MA	Multiple Audio
NSR	No Suggested Retail
OP	Out of Print
S	Stereo
SS	Surround Sound



*Yuri Mgoyan as the wandering minstrel, with Angelic familiars,
in Sergel Paradzhanov's astounding ASHIK KERIB.*

"Wow!"—comes at the end, and I won't reveal it here. Suffice it to say, if this is your first Paradzhanov film, it won't be your last.

The film (which carries the onscreen subtitle **THE FORLORN MINSTREL**, and is dedicated to the memory of Andrei Tarkovsky) is modestly cropped from a non-anamorphic gauge; the image is almost entirely represented, and one or two tightly balanced compositions show that the cropping slightly favors the right side of the screen. The box lists an incorrect running time of 75m.

THE DARK HALF

1991, Orion Home Video,
HF/S/SS, NSR, 121m 16s

George A. Romero's adaptation of Stephen King's 1989

novel—his first full-length feature since **MONKEY SHINES** (1988)—was shelved for two years due to Orion Pictures' financial problems. Timothy Hutton plays novelist Thaddeus Beaumont who, after completing his first mainstream masterpiece, finds his life complicated by a blackmailer threatening to ruin his career by revealing his dual identity as best-selling horror novelist George Stark. Beaumont tries to sidestep the extortionist by going public and burying his alter ego, but George Stark (a remarkable Hutton performance) has other plans, asserting his identity by assuming human form and going on a murder spree in his steel-tipped boots and bitchin' car.

This handsome, autumnal film is clearly the work of an artist (several, in fact) but it goes astray

by attempting to depict its metaphysical conflict in *physical* terms, leaving the viewer unsure of what is really going on, and why. The only attempt at explanation is an arresting prefatory sequence that introduces Beaumont as a child prone to seizures, which surgeons trace to the remnants of an undeveloped twin in his brain; however, what follows takes us into *physical* (not psychological) territory. If we don't know what we're seeing, we can't know what to believe and, therefore, cannot suspend our disbelief. It doesn't help matters that George Stark, when he appears, bears no resemblance to the "Richard Bachman" photo on the backs of "his" novels.

It seems like there's been much more, but this is only Romero's

second adaptation of King's writing (the first was **CREEPSHOW**, 1980). It's also hard to recognize this as Romero's work; the dynamic cutting and self-described "cubist" techniques that originally defined his style have been replaced with smooth, professional confidence. **THE DARK HALF** contains some nicely offbeat character roles (including one by Julie Harris as an eccentric, pipe-smoking, lady professor), but Romero's own authorial voice is too valuable to be wasted paraphrasing the daydreams of others. Christopher Young's elegiac score (and its inspired use of Elvis Presley's "Are You Lonesome Tonight?" as a *leitmotif*) stands out as one of the film's best features.

Orion's transfer is exceptional, with the perfect degree of duski-ness, and the surround sound contains some startling, even

spectacular, passages. The film's problematic running time is forcing Orion to issue the title on laserdisc as a two-disc release at \$49.95, an unusually high price for a single movie.

THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN

1942, MCA Universal #80879, D/CC, \$14.98, 67m 17s

Universal's sequel to their lavish **SON OF FRANKENSTEIN** (1939) is generally considered to mark the series' point of decline, but it's a well-acted work with several captivating scenes. When the townsfolk of Frankenstein decide to dynamite the late doctor's castle and its bad memories into oblivion, the blast liberates the Monster (Lon Chaney—acting for the first time without the "Jr.") from his sulphurous resting place.

The creature is found by bullet-riddled, broken-necked Ygor (Bela Lugosi) and escorted to the neighboring town of Visaria, where they seek assistance from Dr. Ludwig Frankenstein, the doctor's "natural" offspring (Sir Cedric Hardwicke), who specializes in diseases of the mind. The ghost of Heinrich Frankenstein (also Hardwicke) appears to Ludwig and persuades him that the family name can be restored to its former glory if the Monster's criminal brain is replaced with a healthy one, but Ygor persuades Frankenstein's power-mad associate (Lionel Atwill) to transplant *his* brain from his battered body, a switch that would enable them to "rule the state, even *the whole country!*"

The cast is one of the finest ever assembled by Universal, with even the least significant roles filled by the likes of Dwight Frye

The Monster (Lon Chaney) wants to exchange his criminal brain for that of little Janet Ann Gallow, much to the chagrin of Ygor (Bela Lugosi) in GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN.





Alex D'Arcy transformed by weird venom in *THE HORRORS OF SPIDER ISLAND*.

and Harry Cording. Chaney is good as the Monster, whom he interprets (by way of his acclaimed Lenny from 1939's **OF MICE AND MEN**) as a towering, tormented man-child, misunderstood and misunderstanding of his own strength. His scenes with little Janet Ann Gallow (who thinks he's the giant from her story-books) are charming yet suspenseful, touching uneasily on one's memories of the Monster's disastrous encounter with little Maria. Lugosi is at the peak of his form; this may not be his best performance (obsessives that we are, we favor **THE RAVEN**), but it's his best as Ygor, which many historians now regard as the most significant role of his career. The romance angle, this time involving Evelyn Ankers and Ralph Bellamy, is nicely deemphasized, and the script is rich in action and pathos. Unfortunately, Erle C. Kenton's bland direction and the

shared cinematography duties fail to interpret the script in any consistent or artistic way, and the masterpiece that might have been (in, say, Robert Siodmak's hands) comes across as an agreeable, if impersonal, programmer. It's well worth seeing, though, and MCA has heightened its pleasures with a lovely digital transfer.

HORRORS OF SPIDER ISLAND

1959, *Something Weird Video*, \$23.00 ppd., 76m 51s

We thought we'd never live to see the day, but *Something Weird Video* has somehow gained possession of the original English-dubbed negative of Fritz Böttger's long-lost *Eln Toter Hing Im Netz* ["A Corpse Hangs in the Web," 1960], had it transferred to tape, and made it available to the public for the first time in more than thirty years! It's Volume #2

of "Frank Henenlotter's *Sexy Shockers* from the Vaults."

Alex D'Arcy stars as a Hollywood talent agent who hires a group of attractive young dancers for a performance in Singapore; en route, the plane catches fire and crashes off the coast of an uncharted South Pacific island, overrun with weird, spider-like creatures. When D'Arcy is bitten by one of these things, he undergoes a frightful transformation and abducts the women one by one. The horror sequences were obviously filmed as an afterthought, and D'Arcy admitted in a recent interview to taking over the direction from Böttger late in the schedule—when it was meant to be nothing more than a "girls in paradise" exploitation item—and filming all the horror sequences himself. (This may explain why the monster is rather blatantly played by a less robustly-built D'Arcy stand-in.) We only wish there were more such



Jon Hall socks it to the Nazis in MCA Universal's INVISIBLE AGENT.

horror sequences; they remind us of the *OUTER LIMITS* episode, "**The Zanti Misfits**" (filmed three years later) and lend some much needed atmosphere and excitement to what otherwise resembles a bland, yet unwholesome Beach Party movie.

The film's US distributor, Pace-maker Pictures, issued this movie in two versions: the horror version (with the title shown above) and a supposedly straight "girlie" version titled **IT'S HOT IN PARADISE** which, oddly enough, is the title on SWV's tape. (It contains a brief skinny-dipping sequence, observed from a distance.) The direction is credited to Jaime Nolan, who most likely supervised the English-dubbing sessions. The main actors speak English, and their dialog is fairly well synchronized; the words spoken (sometimes with regional accents) by the

supporting cast are not only wildly out-of-sync, but occasionally surreal ("Are you always so picayunish?"). The character of Babs is played by Barbara Valentin (real name: Ursula Lederstger), who later resurfaced in a number of Fassbinder films.

The transfer is impeccable, obviously culled from a negative untouched for decades. We don't mind the "Special Edition" and 1993 copyright notice SWV has superimposed on the title card, but why did the transfer supervisor allow the closing shot to roll halfway out of frame?

INVISIBLE AGENT

1942, MCA Universal #81557, D/CC, \$14.98

When Frank Griffin's grandson (Jon Hall) is physically threatened by Nazi officers bent on acquiring

his ancestor's invisibility drug, he escapes, enlists, and uses the formula to spy on the Axis powers for the United States. He parachutes over German lines, makes contact with alluring double agent Ilona Massey (dressed in a galaxy of Vera West glitter), and struggles to foil Hitler's double-whammy plan to obliterate New York City with Pearl Harbor-like suicide air battalions.

Directed by Edwin L. Marin (**THE DEATH KISS**, 1933) and scripted by Curt Siodmak, this is an unusually mixed-up bit of WWII fantasy; it can't seem to make up its mind whether Nazis are heartless murderers or pompous buffoons. (A scene of Hall invisibly—and literally—kicking *Der Fuhrer's* butt was wisely removed shortly before the theatrical release.) The film benefits considerably from its inspired miscasting; Hall's chief adversaries are two

German SS Officers (played by Sir Cedric Hardwicke and J. Edward Bromberg, who were respectively *British* and *Hungarian*) and an insidious Japanese agent (Peter Lorre, a *German* actor, in his only Universal horror role), none of whom is shy about indulging his cold-blooded, sadistic tendencies. The great Keye Luke appears almost subliminally, and Albert Basserman shines as the aged carpenter who cannot sign a confession because his Nazi interrogators have broken his fingers.

Unfortunately, the element that will attract most viewers to this film—namely, John P. Fulton's Oscar-nominated special effects—is less successful here than in previous efforts; forced to work faster and with greater economy, Fulton primarily suggested Hall's invisibility with a number of in-camera techniques (ie., angled glass shots) that are easily seen through. Flawed and decidedly uneven, this is nevertheless a better-than-average example of escapist wartime entertainment. MCA's digital transfer is excellent, and preserves in uncut form a movie that is often condensed for television airings.

THE INVISIBLE WOMAN

1940, MCA Universal #80546,
D/CC, \$14.98, 72m

Virginia Bruce stars in this lightweight frolic, as a fashion model who allows kooky Professor Gibbs (John Barrymore) to make her invisible so that she can kick her tyrannical boss (Charles Lane as "Mr. Growley") in the seat of his pants without suffering the consequences. With this working-class triumph out of the way, she must help the penniless Gibbs back into the good graces of his newly-impoorished benefactor (John Howard), whose fortune he hopes to recover with his wacky invention. Conflict being the heart of drama, a gang of

comic crooks (including Shemp Howard) are dragged in to steal Gibbs' invisibility machine, which they need to help their "lonesome, homesick" boss (Oskar Homolka) return unwitnessed to the city that sent him into a Mexican exile. Aside from being based on a story by Curt Siodmak and Joe May, this fluffy A. Edward Sutherland comedy has absolutely no other connection to Universal's Invisible Man series; it benefits from a familiar and capable cast, unreels with polish and zest, and doesn't overstay its welcome. The only wincing comes from the dated, dandified slapstick of Charles Ruggles (as John Howard's dithering manservant) and an incautious scene between Bruce and Lane, in which special effects man John P. Fulton allows his invisible star's black

bodystocking to stand out momentarily against her white dress. It's not unlike one of those Professor Pepperwinkle episodes of *THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN*; in fact, I think it eventually became one. A lovely digital transfer, with windowboxed main and end credits sequences.

ISLAND OF LOST SOULS

1932, MCA Universal #80609,
D/CC, \$14.98, 70m

Based on H.G. Wells' 1896 novel *THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU*, this chilling adaptation touches a nerve that no other horror film—with the possible exception of Tod Browning's *FREAKS* (also '32)—comes near. A series of misadventures lands a shipwrecked man (Richard Arlen) on an uncharted, South Pacific isle ruled by a mad

Richard Arlen protects Leila Hyams on Dr. Moreau's *ISLAND OF LOST SOULS*.





Our host, mugging in the morgue, from Showtime's JOHN CARPENTER PRESENTS "BODY BAGS."

scientist (Charles Laughton) who has found a way to surgically "advance" animals centuries beyond their current stage of evolution in his operating theater, *The House of Pain*. The resulting "manimals" (led by a baleful Bela Lugosi) work as Moreau's slaves, yet are banished by him to live clothed in the wilderness, where they must struggle against their true natures to live in accordance with their maker's laws—not to walk on four legs, not to spill blood. ("Are we not men?") Our hero is prevented from leaving the island when Moreau decides to use him to test the "human" emotions of his most complete achievement, Lota the Panther Woman (a brilliant, exotic performance by Kathleen Burke). As this tragic experiment inevitably fails, so does Moreau's placid demeanor, endangering the safety of the island's human inhabitants as its

half-human natives discover that their lord and master is a mere mortal who does not live by his own laws.

Director Erle C. Kenton's later work (**THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN**, **HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN** and **HOUSE OF DRACULA**) demonstrates that he was no more than efficient, only as good as his cast and cinematographer; here, he was fortunate to have the best of both. Laughton, with his crazy eyes embedded in a round, soft, infantile face, adorned with a tiny Mephistophilean goatee, is unforgettable. Burke (whom the title card identifies only as "The Panther Woman") makes one of the genre's most indelible debuts—erotic yet anguished, warm-blooded and alluring, yet provocatively alien; she was unable to shed her panther skin—moving from this to **MURDERS IN THE ZOO** (1933) and **THE LION MAN**

(1936)—and retired early from the screen. When Lota fails to seduce Arlen and is threatened by Moreau with a return to *The House of Pain* ("This time I'll burn *all* the animal in her out!"), his words wield a potent and blasphemous charge, even today. The half-human characters, led by Lugosi's fur-faced figurehead of agony and outrage, are also memorable and ideally cast; their climactic mutiny is one of the genre's most frightening sequences. Even more responsible for the film's demonic aura and enduring quality is the ingenious cinematography of Karl Struss—who photographed Rouben Mamoulian's **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE** the same year. Struss' camera prowls the humid jungle sets with the litheness of a jungle cat, and paints the daylight scenes with soft, primordial mists. The distorted lenses he chooses to frame the feral, accusing faces at the

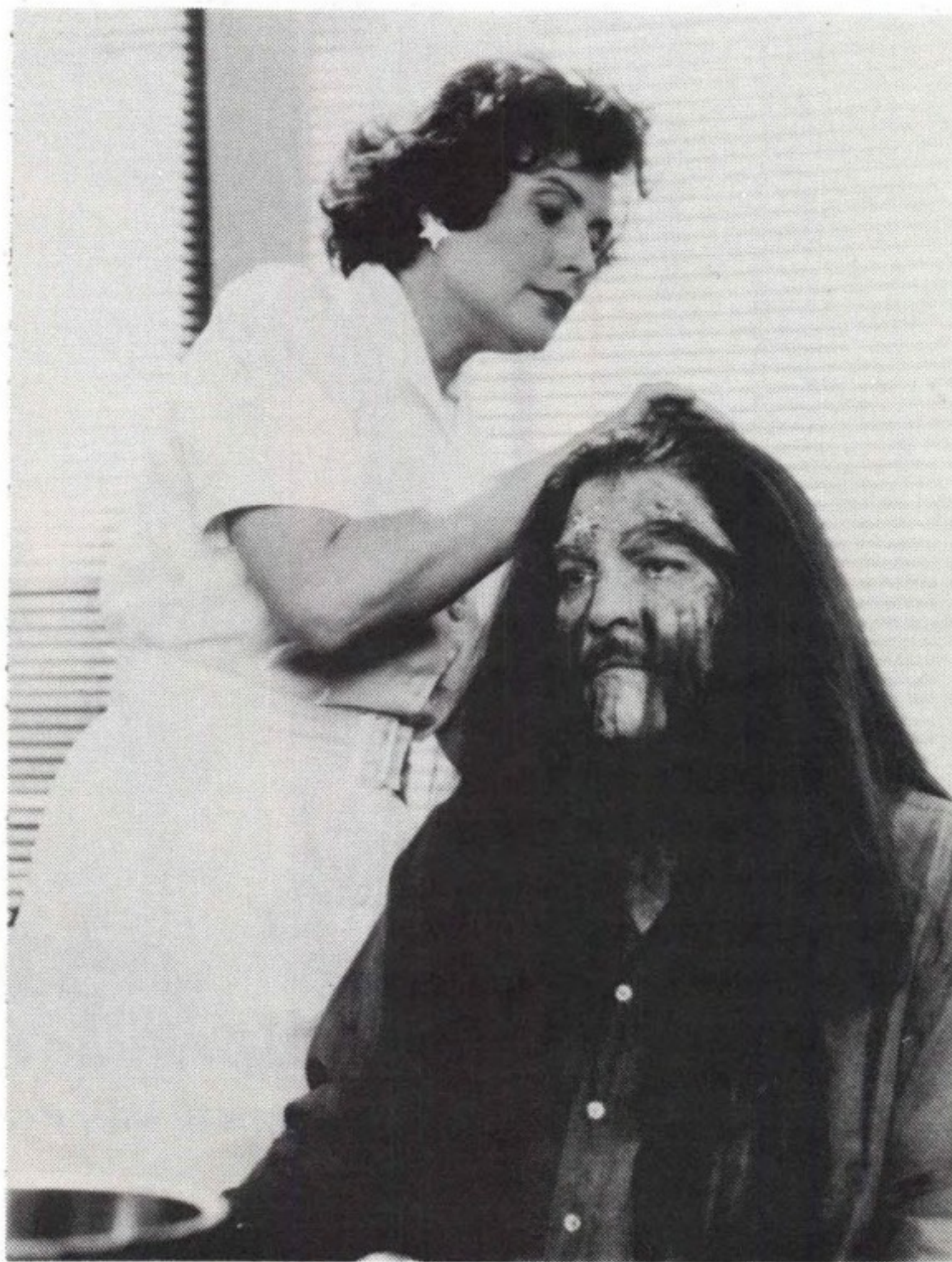
climax leaves no one uncertain as to whose side we are on.

MCA has done a splendid job with this digital transfer, though the complete elimination of surface noise during non-dialog passages results in a total absence of sound that can be distracting. (For example, when the ape-man Ouran [Hans Steinke] jumps Lota to prevent her escape, their wrestling match is dead quiet.) The main titles are windowboxed, and the source materials are in extremely good condition for a film of such age, with only a couple of instances where dialog is impeded by frame repair. Of the 10 new releases in MCA's "Classic Monsters Collection," this is the one most likely to receive a laser-disc release. It is also the most deserving.

JOHN CARPENTER PRESENTS "BODY BAGS"

8/8/93, Showtime Networks Inc.,
HF/S, 94m 13s

This three-part anthology film (scripted by Billy Brown and Dan Angel) represents Showtime's challenge to the soon-ending reign of HBO's popular *TALES OF THE CRYPT* series, now in its final season. John Carpenter, who directed two of the segments, hosts as an undead, scraggly morgue attendant (makeup courtesy of Rick Baker) who delivers weak, predictably morbid puns with a mincing, countrified acting style. These wraparounds were directed by Larry Sulkis. The first story, "The Gas Station," finds a studious attendant (Alex Datcher) plagued by disturbing and malicious customers during her first night on the job. The episode, which also features Robert Carradine, David Naughton, and amusing cameos by Wes Craven and Sam Raimi, is fairly predictable but includes a number of trademark



Nurse Deborah Harry attends to needy patient Stacy Keach in *BODY BAGS*' "Hair" segment.

Carpenter flourishes still capable of making a viewer jump.

"Hair," the second tale, stars Stacy Keach as "Richard Cobritz" (in honor of the producer of *SALEM'S LOT* and *CHRISTINE!*), a man obsessed with his thinning hair, who entrusts his scalp to an experimental process with disastrous results. Thanks to Keach's courageous and sensitive performance, the episode touches sadly and humorously on male fears concerning baldness and aging, and features some excellent stop motion work by Effects Animation Inc. Unfortunately, the inspiration doesn't last and the brilliance of the set-up succumbs to climactic clichés and a lame *denouement*. The supporting cast includes Sheena Easton, David Warner, and a most apropos choice, Deborah Harry.

Carpenter turns the directorial reigns over to Tobe Hooper for the

final chapter, "Eye," perhaps feeling that he had already covered this ground with his script for *EYES OF LAURA MARS* (1978). Mark Hamill plays a promising minor league ballplayer who, on the eve of his big chance to play for the majors, loses his right eye in a car accident. He accepts a surgeon's offer of an eye transplant, which restores his sight but causes him to become possessed by its previous owner, a serial killer and necrophile who died in the electric chair. Hooper takes the material as far as cable television will allow, with the Bible-thumping maniac threatening his pregnant wife (Twiggy) as he remembers simultaneously eating and making love to his dead mother, and Hamill gives a startling, vivid, wildcat performance. Potent stuff, which is rendered more palatable by the in-joke guest appearances of John Agar and Roger Corman (whose



Benoit Poelvoorde as the serial killer Patard in *MAN BITES DOG*.

"X" **THE MAN WITH X-RAY EYES** [1963] is quoted... sort of) as Hamill's doctors. Hooper also appears on-camera in the concluding wraparound with Carpenter and comedian (and former slaughterhouse worker) Tom Arnold.

In contrast to *TALES FROM THE CRYPT*, where mainstream directors like Sydney Pollack and Walter Hill used the horror genre to slum and to train a mind-numbing parade of actors-turned-directors, Carpenter and company have brought the craftsmanship of their trade to **BODY BAGS**. It's a treat for the fans, rich in low-brow laughs and knee-deep in gore, with a few artful scares for the connoisseur. It's not the best work of these creative folks, but not a bad way to kill an evening.

MAN BITES DOG

1992, Fox Lorber #FLV-1087, HF/LB, \$89.95, 91m 55s

Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel, and Benoit Poelvoorde co-directed this violent, B&W satire, in which a

documentary film crew accompany their subject—serial killer Benoit Patard (Poelvoorde)—on his day-to-day routine: visiting his doting mother and dotty grandparents, reciting his pompous poetry, drinking in pubs, and murdering strangers (and even friends!) in their homes. In the course of the crew's exposure to Ben's unpredictable, threatening, yet strangely beguiling behavior, they find themselves "crossing the line" to become active participants in his reign of terror.

Originally titled *C'est Arrivé près de Chez Vous* ("Coming Soon to Your House"), this film won the International Critics Prize at the 1992 Cannes Film Festival; contrary to its reputation, it isn't particularly well-made, and it makes all of its rather sophomoric points about society's veneration of violent entertainment, and the amoral irresponsibility of the Media, very early on. The film seems unsure of whether it wants to be about the making of a documentary, or the document itself; the

filmmakers sometimes stray from their *faux-cinema vérité* format with arty slow-motion fugues and cutaways to apparently "unfilmed" moments, without clarifying their intentions. The French dialog is subtitled with odd, slangy, English paraphrasing: for instance, when Ben tells a waiter with a bad complexion to get lost, it comes out "Take care of your face case."

Fox Lorber is making this film available in two versions: an "uncut director's version" that is rated NC-17 (the basis of this review), and an "unrated edited version" (#FLV-1094) both of which sell for the same price. (Gee, we thought an "unrated" film, by definition, had to be *more* explicit than an NC-17 release.) The company would not provide us with their "edited" version, but we assume that it is lacking the gang rape sequence, a relentless vignette that features glimpses of male nudity, ends in graphic evisceration, and brings new meaning to the phrase "kitchen-sink realism." The film's low-budget

origins (was this shot in 16mm?) result in occasional, perhaps even intentional, glare; the transfer is very good, however, and letterboxed with an aspect ratio of approximately 1.60:1. If Touchstone ever decides to produce an American remake of *this* French hit, the director they should be talking to is Jim Van Bebber.

THE MUMMY'S CURSE

1944, MCA Universal #80865,
D/CC, \$14.98, 60m 9s

The odds were against it, but this final entry in Universal's Kharis series is the best of the lot (if you can swallow some mammoth inconsistencies). For instance: **THE MUMMY'S HAND** took place in 1940, **THE MUMMY'S TOMB** took place 30 years after that, and **THE MUMMY'S GHOST** took place two years later, so **THE MUMMY'S CURSE**—which picks up the story 25 years down the line—must be set in 1997!

A quarter century after Kharis (Lon Chaney) drowned with the reincarnation of Princess Ananka (Virginia Christine) in a Massachusetts swamp, two Scripps Museum scientists (Dennis Moore and Peter Coe) travel to the location—which has somehow slipped down the coast to *Louisiana bayou country!*—in hopes of excavating their remains. Kharis is revived (offscreen) by a passing bulldozer before he can be found, after which the Egyptian Coe sets about his secret agenda, preparing a makeshift Temple of Arkam in a ruined church, maintaining Kharis' heartbeat with three nightly tanna leaves, and recruiting a local workman (the always-sinister Martin Kosleck) to help procure Ananka and return the two mummified lovers to Egypt. Alas, before her body can be found, Ananka revives from her premature burial as an amnesiac, and joins the Scripps party

as a strange, sun-worshipping research assistant.

Ananka's resurrection is rightly celebrated today as the outstanding sequence of the series; in this eerie yet strangely moving piece of mime, Christine graduates from a stiffened corpse to a fluid, languid human being, and we can sense in her limbering movements the restoration of her heartbeat, the warming of her blood, and the sensual pleasure she derives from the kiss of sunlight. It's one of the best horror sequences to be found in any Universal Picture, and it makes one believe

that Christine (whose entire performance is first-rate) could have become one of the cinema's first Scream Queens, had she wished for such a cognomen. (Instead, she made her fortune as "Mrs. Olsen" in countless Folger's Coffee commercials.) And let us not forget Lon Chaney, who receives at least twice as much screen time as usual, and manages to enthuse a real, frightening persona through his dusty wrappings. The presence of Kosleck (who else could preface an attempted stabbing with a line like "I meant no harm...?") enriches

Lon Chaney as that died-in-the-gauze romantic Kharis, in THE MUMMY'S GHOST.



the otherwise colorless background, and also compensates for Peter Coe's rather limp villainy. Director Leslie Goodwins (who also made Universal's **MURDERS IN THE BLUE ROOM** and RKO's **GENIUS AT WORK**) deserves credit for strengthening this often faltering series on nearly all counts, and sending Kharis to his eternal grave on a high note.

The quality of the film elements used for this digital transfer is superb, including windowboxed credits and a crystal-clear soundtrack. However, the image intermittently suffers from fluctuating contrast, an apparent side-effect of "copy-protection" coating—a trait that, for some reason, isn't quite so pronounced on other MCA "Classic Monsters Collection" titles.

THE MUMMY'S GHOST

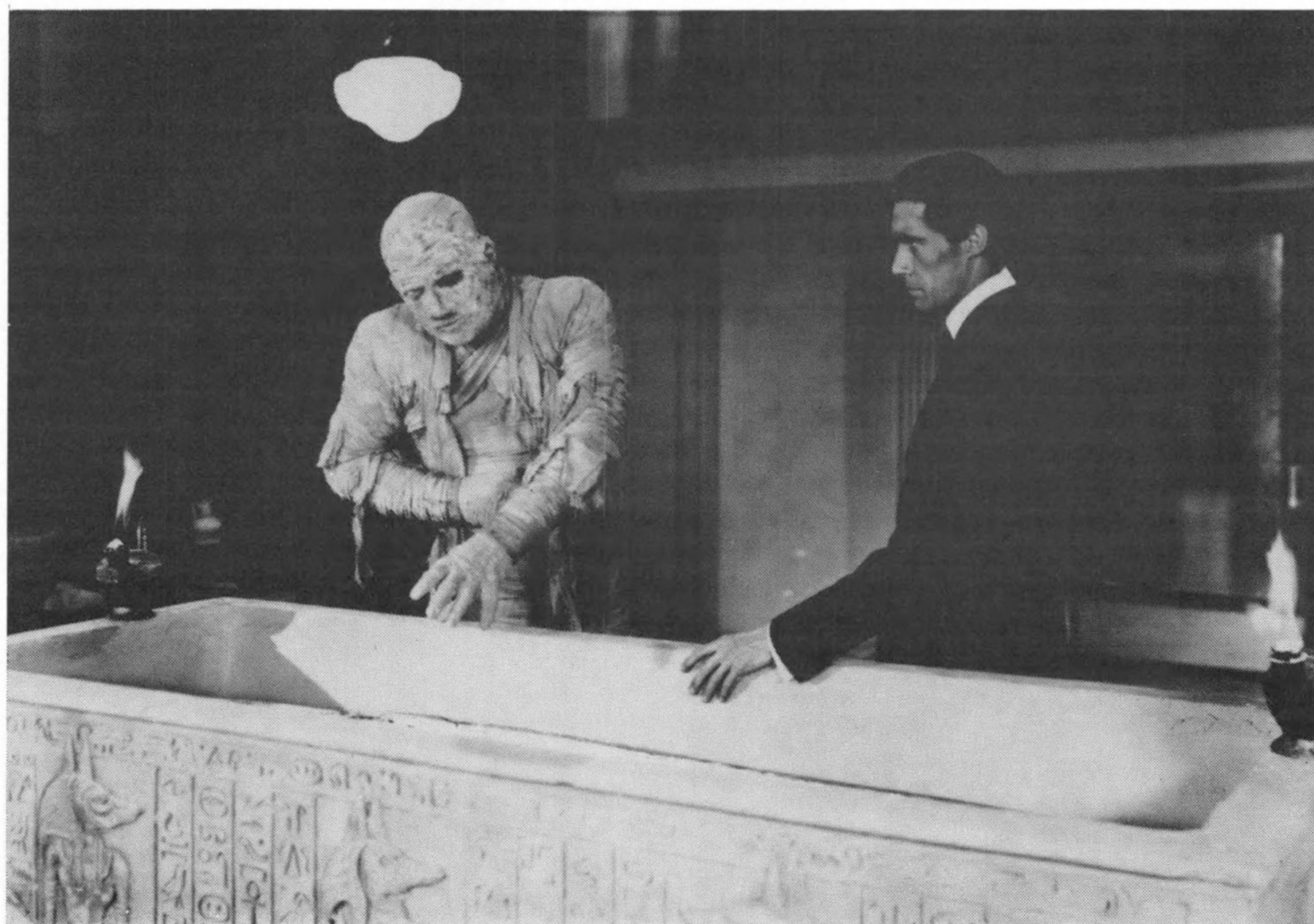
1944, MCA Universal #80856, D/CC, \$14.98, 60m 21s

Two years after **THE MUMMY'S TOMB**, Universal revived the undying mummy Kharis (Lon Chaney) for this less attractive, somewhat better-organized sequel. John Carradine stars as Yousef Bey, latest in the long line of disciples to the High Priest of Arkam (George Zucco, still alive after croaking at the outset of **TOMB**), who is assigned to recover Kharis and the body of the Princess Ananka and return them to Egypt. Kharis, like Zucco, has survived his apparent death in New England and is summoned by Yousef Bey with the burning of nine tanna leaves. In a remarkable scene, the exhibited remains of Ananka crumble to dust at Kharis' slightest touch, causing her ancient spirit to seek refuge in

the nearest Egyptian body, that of young, superstitious heroine Amina Mansouri (Ramsay Ames), causing her Andrews Sisters hairdo to develop a scintillating, **BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN**-style shock of white. Kharis senses the spirit of Ananka in Amina and abducts her, but his rights to the Princess are unexpectedly challenged by the fanatical Bey, who covets her beauty at first sight.

Reginald LeBorg (whose work has accrued a surprising number of devotees in recent years) directed, but his handling of this sixty-minute saga is not particularly distinguished. It's inexcusable that *no one* mentions Ames' peculiar change of hair color (not even her *boyfriend!*), and that a common sheriff can identify at a glance the ancient mold left by Kharis' grip on his victims' throats—something that egyptologist Frank

THE MUMMY'S TUB? No, it's Lon Chaney and John Carradine at the bedside of Princess Ananka in THE MUMMY'S GHOST.



Reicher (who reprises his role here) required a *portable lab* to deduce in the previous film! The most memorable horror sequences owe more to expressive editing (eg., the Scripps Museum sequence) and unusual settings (eg., the hideout atop the disused incline) than atmosphere, which William Sickner's cinematography frankly doesn't conjure as well as other films in this series. To its credit, **THE MUMMY'S GHOST** has a brisker-than-usual pace, it's the only film in the series that isn't padded with tedious flashbacks, and it builds to a surprisingly pessimistic finale—something not often encountered in American films of the WWII era.

MCA's digital transfer of this film is only slightly less gorgeous than the other nine; for some reason, this time around, they didn't bother to windowbox the montage of spinning newspaper headlines. The source print is in fine condition, with only brief instances of speckles and scratches.

THE MUMMY'S TOMB

1942, MCA Universal #80855, D/CC, \$14.98, 59m 26s

This barely feature-length sequel to **THE MUMMY'S HAND** (1940) begins with 12m of flashbacks from that film, related by now-aged widower Stephen Banning (Dick Foran) to his older sister Jane (Mary Gordon) and son John (John Hubbard). Meanwhile in Egypt, the same story is being told by the ancient, evil High Priest (George Zucco), who survived his bullet wounds of the previous film and is now passing on his medallions, tanna leaves, and the mummified body of Kharis (Lon Chaney) to a young disciple (Turhan Bey). The disciple relocates to Banning's hometown of Mapleton, Massachusetts, accepts a position as caretaker of the town's graveyard, and fulfills the vendetta against the surviving archaeologists who

defiled the tomb of Kharis' beloved Princess Ananka. After using Kharis to murder Banning, his old colleague Babe Hanson (Wallace Ford, who actually played "Babe Jensen" in the previous film), and various members of the Banning family and household staff, Bey's mission becomes complicated—and ultimately compromised—by his romantic obsession with the young Banning's fiancée, Isobel (Elyse Knox).

Directed by Harold Young (who also directed the Universal B-movies **THE FROZEN GHOST** and **JUNGLE CAPTIVE**, both 1945 releases), **THE MUMMY'S TOMB** is full of messy carpentry and indelible, enchanting images. Zucco's affected "old age" voice changes from shot to shot, and the movie is generally bedevilled by parts that are much too old or much too young for the actors playing them. George Robinson's photography is often powerful and imaginative—Kharis dragging his foot at night under rustling trees (whose heavy foliage reminds us of the tanna leaves animating his body); his cold shadow touching the faces of sleeping villagers who awaken "afraid of their own shadows;" and the fainted Knox being carried in the Mummy's arms to the cemetery, her Vera West nightgown billowing with his bandages in the night winds. (Of course, one can't overestimate the contribution of Hans Salter's pensive music to the atmosphere of such scenes.) Chaney looks superb in Jack Pierce's charred wrappings and mutilated makeup, but the character's traditional air of romantic tragedy is sadly neglected; the actor is required to summon emotion in only one scene, as his sense of obedience suppresses his outrage at Bey's orders to bring Knox to him. The movie also serves as an interesting time capsule of its era: at one point, the story is interrupted by Hubbard's receipt of his

draft notice, and Bey is ultimately identified as the bad guy (and sought by a torch-bearing mob) for the simple reason that he is Mapleton's token foreigner.

MCA has given the film a princely digital transfer, which not only letterboxes the newspaper headline montages, but also the scenes that precede and follow them. Unfortunately, their source print is incomplete: the groundskeeper's encounter with Kharis at the kennel cuts directly to the hospital, deleting a 55s sequence including the strangling of Mary Gordon's character, and Kharis' return to his tomb ("Two are dead," says Bey, "and two remain.")!

THE PERVERSE COUNTESS

1973, Video Search of Miami, \$27.90 ppd., 86m 13s

Jess Franco's **La Comtesse Perverse** (directed by "Clifford Brown") is—like John Woo's recent **HARD TARGET**—a rough improvisation on themes found in Pichel and Schoedsack's **THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME** (1932). Sylvia (Lina Romay), a stupid tourist, ignores the warnings of her horror writer companion (Caroline Riviére) and spends the weekend with a handsome stranger (Robert Woods), who is not only married but also a supplier of young, unwilling victuals to the flesh-eating Count and Countess Zaroff (Howard Vernon and Alice Arno). Franco succeeds admirably, with feverish dialog and frenzied music, at creating an aura of repugnant evil about the island where the Zaroffs live in a magnificent, labyrinthine, crimson pagoda, and Vernon and Arno are well-cast as the cannibal couple. After a series of wink-nudge meals and some kinky sexual encounters, the film builds to a brave and titillating climax wherein a nude Romay is hunted



by an equally nude Arno, who, with her bow and quiver of arrows, looks wonderfully like the goddess Diana come to life.

Contrary to the title that VSoM has given to this English-subtitled conversion, the print used for this transfer was *Les Croqueuses* ("The Munchers"), which contains a 1974 hardcore insert sequence of Romya munching on Pierre Taylou and Monica Swinn (who do not figure elsewhere in the story). This film also circulates on Venezuelan video under the odd title **SEXY NATURE**, a Spanish-language version that contains some particularly ugly hardcore footage (not filmed by Franco) that thankfully isn't included here. This is one of the best-looking VSoM tapes we've seen, and **THE PERVERSE COUNTESS** easily ranks with the best of Franco's work from this intensely creative period.

REVENGE OF THE CREATURE

1955, MCA Universal #81299, D/CC, \$14.98, 81m 32s

Jack Arnold directed this so-so sequel to his classic **CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON** (1954), in which the Gill Man is dynamited in Amazonian waters and taken comatose to the chains of a special observation tank at Florida's Marineland. Scientist John Agar and "pretty ichthyology student" Lori Nelson take charge of taming the Creature and training him to accept food, while falling in love after hours. Meanwhile, the Gill Man forms his own attachment to Nelson and abducts her, shortly after breaking loose when Agar "tames" him once too often with a bull-prod.

Filmed (but rarely shown) in 3-D, this movie borrows too much

from **KING KONG** to stand very well on its own, and Martin Berkeley's script is rife with unexplored avenues and gaping plot holes. We never see our hero and heroine meet, nor are we present when they become engaged; similarly, John Bromfield (a more heroic and charismatic type than Agar) is briefly groomed as a romantic rival, then dropped abruptly from the foreground. On the plus side, Arnold demonstrates a knack for startling shock imagery—the Creature surfacing to grab a pelican off a floating log, for instance—that hasn't been diluted by the passing decades. The scene of Nelson desperately clinging to a jangling buoy, in an attempt to free herself from the clutches of the Gill Man, is also remarkable for its stark presentation, which by rejecting the studied lighting schemes seen elsewhere in the film looks genuinely alarming. There are also memorable bit parts by Clint Eastwood (as a lab assistant), Brett Halsey (as a teenager killed by the monster), and Nestor Paiva (reprising his role as Lucas). But, all in all, **REVENGE OF THE CREATURE** is not as confidently crafted as the original, nor as thought-provoking as John Sherwood's third entry, **THE CREATURE WALKS AMONG US** (MCA Universal #81519, \$14.95).

MCA's liner notes for this title are not only incorrect, but amusingly pretentious. They describe how Nelson, caught at a "career vs. motherhood" crossroads, forms "an uneasy emotional link" with the "hauntingly beautiful alien" (sic) until "they are both driven to break free of their respective 'prisons' with exciting results." (That's not the movie *we* saw.) The image quality is very good, but the sound of this digitally-recorded tape is even more impressive, and sounds terrific when amplified.

SATAN IN HIGH HEELS

1962, *Something Weird Video*, \$23.00 ppd., 89m 47s

Behind this intriguing title lurks the sordid show-biz tale of Stacey Kane (Meg Myles), a low-born carnival dancer who coasts on her considerable charms to the Big Apple, where she worms her way into position as a nightclub singer and millionaire's mistress... and loses all before Opening Night! This clichéd premise is transformed into hugely enjoyable, exuberant trash by director Jerald Intrator (who later filmed the erotic inserts for **THE CURIOUS DR. HUMPP** [VW 19:12-13]) and given chiaroscuro gloss (if not class) by cinematographer Bernard Hirschenson; the result is neither a horror or sexploitation film, but rather a stylish, urban sleeper that recalls early, sleazy Anita Ekberg vehicles like John Gilling's **PICKUP ALLEY** (1957) and Gerd Oswald's **SCREAMING MIMI** (1958). The film's highlight—aside from Grayson Hall's flamboyant performance as Pépé, a chain-smoking, lesbian club owner—is Myles' sultry performance of "The Female of the Species (is More Deadly Than the Male)," an amazing number which *Something Weird Video* has honored by making it the theme song for their series "Frank Henenlotter's Sexy Shockers" (of which this is #7). **HORROR OF PARTY BEACH** director Del Tenney worked as the film's assistant director, and appears onscreen as the misbehaving son and heir of Myles' wealthy paramour, with whom she finds true love. John T. Chapman's screenplay was novelized as a paperback original, which is bound to skyrocket in value as this once-lost, now-recovered film claims a new circle of admirers. Transferred from the original 35mm negative, the image is framed at 1.33 and looks almost brand-new.

The Gillman sweeps Lori Nelson off her flippers in Jack Arnold's REVENGE OF THE CREATURE.

THE VANISHING

1992, FoxVideo #1997,
HF/S/SS/CC, NSR, 109m 22s

George Sluizer's American directorial debut, a supposed "re-make" of his 1990 Dutch sleeper of the same name [reviewed VW 10:17], in fact takes an entirely different approach, using the same basis—Tim Krabbe's Dutch novel *THE GOLDEN EGG*—while extracting from its haunting narrative a gratifyingly new set of themes and motifs. In the original version, a man loses his Significant Other at a gas station and spends the next three years searching for a concrete explanation for her complete and total disappearance. A stranger eventually appears, admits to abducting the woman, and tells her lover that he can only learn what became of her by submitting to the same process.

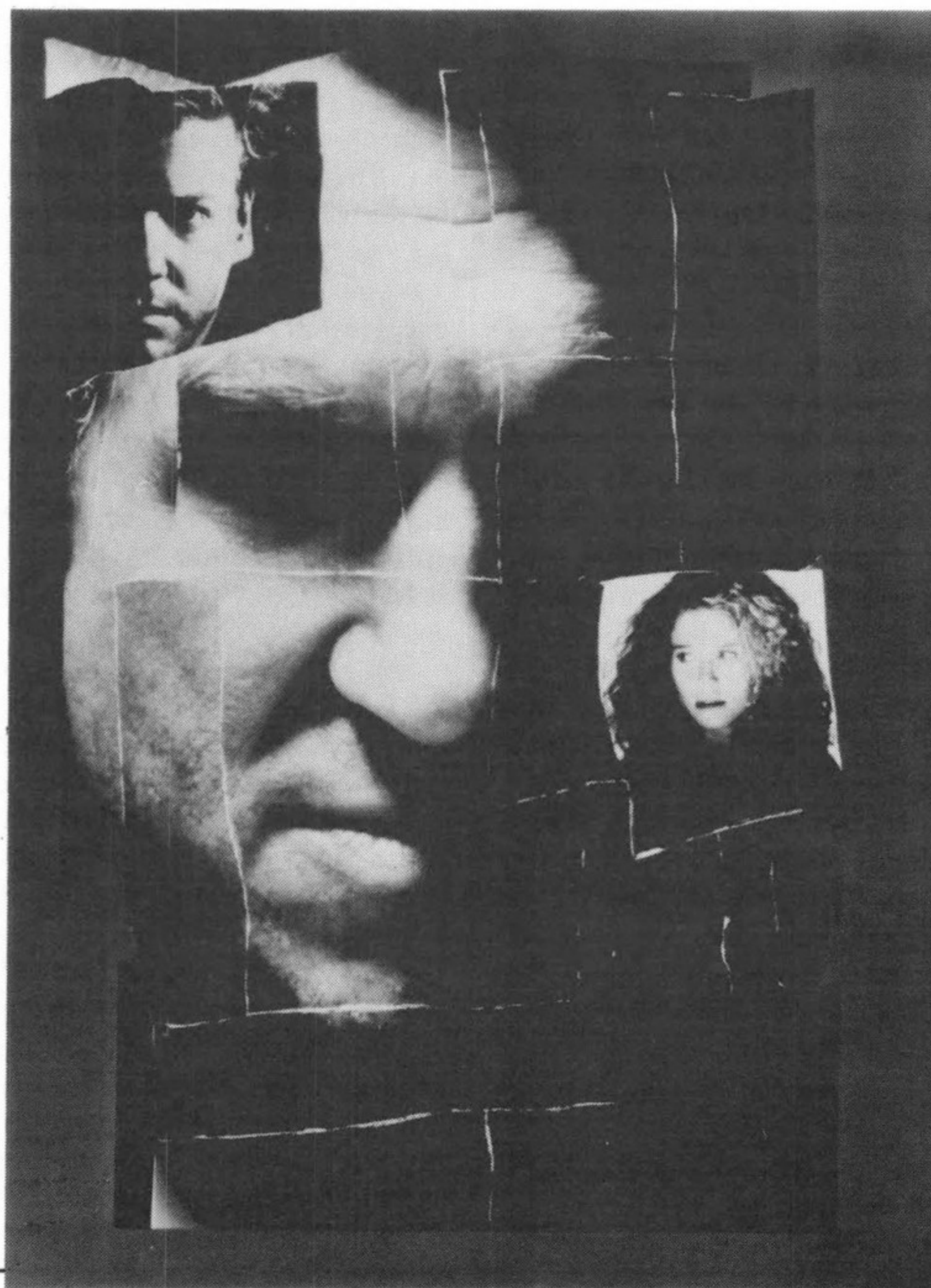
In Sluizer's new version (scripted by Todd Graff), which is so changed as to contain no explanation of the novel's unusual title, we begin with the abductor (a quirky yet riveting Jeff Bridges performance, not far removed from his *STARMAN*) and stick with him for a 12m prologue that establishes him as a husband, father, and academician. (Lisa Eichhorn, who co-starred with Bridges in the 1981 cult film *CUTTER'S WAY*, cameos as his wife.) Only then do we meet our "hero" (Kiefer Sutherland)—who is rapidly delineated as faithless, short-tempered, and self-centered, aspiring author—whose eventual response to the disappearance of his lover (Sandra Bullock) is to sell the rights to his story to a major New York publisher. The existential resonance of the vanishing is further diminished by Sutherland's acquisition of a plain-spoken, working-class girlfriend (well-played by Nancy Travis)—quite a contrast to the monastic, obsessed hero of the Dutch version.

This Americanization of the story—blur the boundaries between Good and Evil, sex it up, and don't forget the money-green eyes of Uncle Sam—would be insulting to its audience, had Sluizer and Graff not taken equal care to explore the male anxieties that gave rise to these commercial clichés, which they do surprisingly well. If the 1990 film was about the reassuring sense of order that can be discerned in even the most horrific events, the 1992 remake is about male insecurity and the elaborate fantasies men sometimes construct (Bridges' cabin renovation, Sutherland's writing) to protect their loved ones from discovering

who they really are, and to protect themselves from ever having to risk their relationships by confessing their desires. ("Romance," as Bridges says, "has to be secret.")

The performances are finely rendered, particularly Sutherland as the compulsive, non-smoking boyfriend who, given a lighter by Bullock moments before she vanishes (for lighting *her* cigarettes), chain-smokes for the rest of the picture—as if to keep the *smell* of her around. Moodily photographed by Peter Suschitzky (*DEAD RINGERS*), the film contains a number of pleasantly disturbing images, not the least of which shows a dead fly blossoming in acid like a lotus

Jeff Bridges, Kiefer Sutherland, and Nancy Travis figure in the poster art for *THE VANISHING*.



flower, our memory of which is stimulated by a later shot of a tire crushing a foam-loaded can of beer. The scenario goes astray at various points—it tries to be clever with an anagram motif (the abducted woman's name is, God help us, Diane Shaver—an anagram of the ungrammatical "Are Vanished"), then tries to make amends by acting stupid (the feel-good coda, which reduces the entire nightmare to an exercise in aversion therapy, should have been cut). However, this film manages to address uncommon notions about male psychology that are seldom confronted by the cinema, and almost never by the American cinema, and it deserves to be considered respectfully and independently of Sluizer's previous outing.

FoxVideo's transfer appears to be a combination of unmatted full-frame shots (matted theatrically to 1.85:1) and cropped closeups; in short, the film's compositions adapt extremely well to video. The effectiveness of the stereo soundtrack is somewhat compromised by a sometimes whimsically lurching, sometimes urgently hammering synthesizer score by Jerry Goldsmith, which is too slick to sound at home in a film about such basically incomplete people.

Two "big-eyed child-adults" from Streamline Video's **PLANET BUSTERS**.



ANIMATION

By G. Michael Dobbs

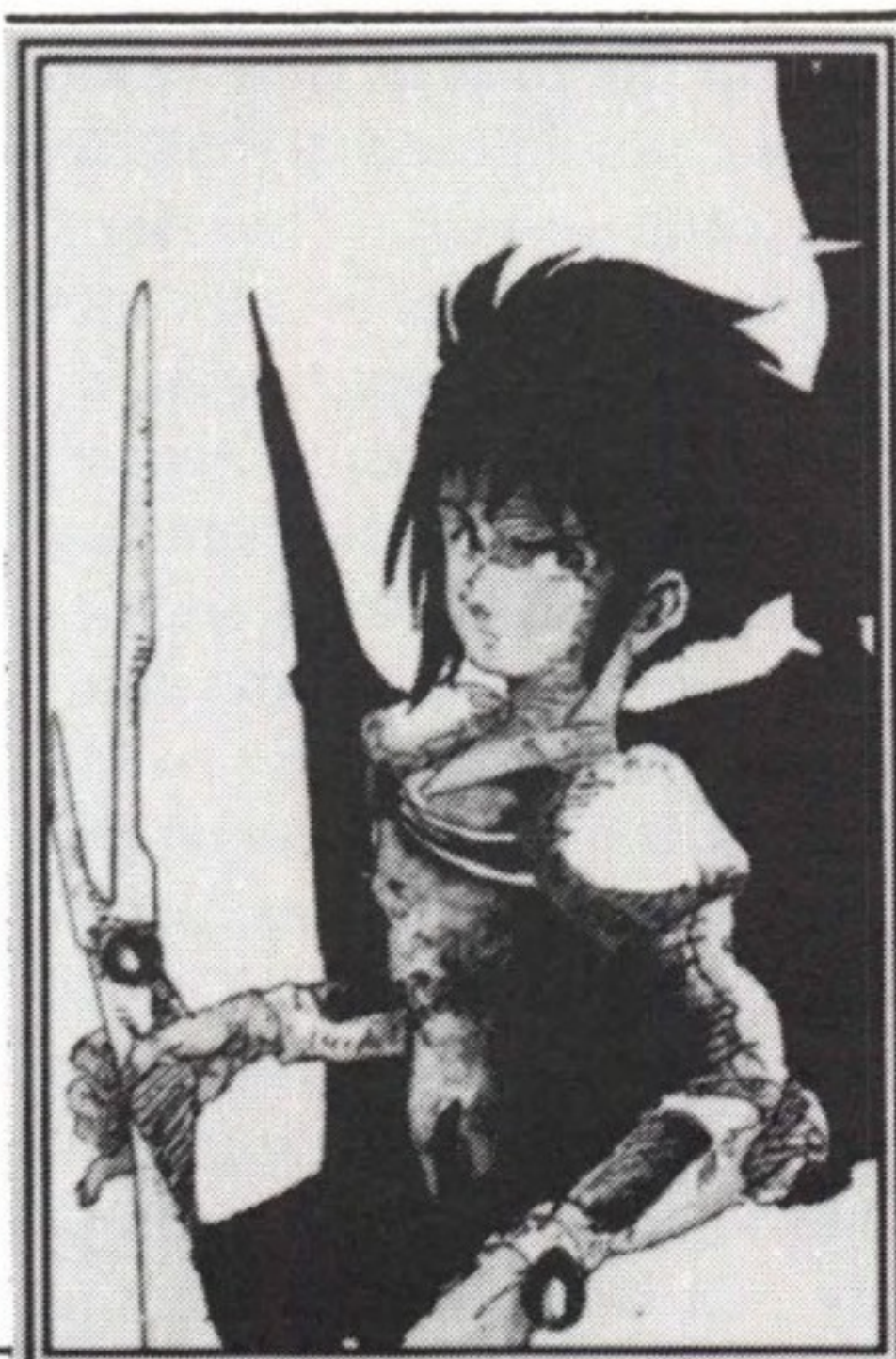
• PLANET BUSTERS

1985, Streamline Pictures Video
#90017, \$29.95, 80m

• NADIA VOL. 1: THE GIRL ON THE EIFFEL TOWER

1989, Streamline Pictures Video
#90019, \$14.95, 25m

One of the homemade axioms I preach to the introductory film class I teach is, "Context is everything." I'm always amazed at the positive effects a little background information can have on a viewer's response to a movie. Having said that, when watching the first of these two Japanimation videos, I asked myself, "What the hell is going on?" **PLANET BUSTERS** has been "freely adapted" for the American market by one Greg Snegoff, and I can't help but wonder what the original film was like. The animation itself is certainly a cut above most American Saturday morning dreck, and the design is typical of Japanimation... big-eyed child-adults.



After much study, I can attest that **PLANET BUSTERS** is a feature-length science fiction/comedy/adventure, concerning a magic sword, a royal heir apparent, a couple of bounty hunters, and evil robots best described as moon-sized bowling balls with attitudes. More obvious is that the structure of the film consists of a truly endless series of chase scenes. Just when I thought there would be a scene revealing the plot points I missed, the production ended! All the heroes died! (Actually, according to some space being who is telling this story to her daughter [the audience is unaware of this celestial narrator], our heroes have merely passed on to a new plane of existence.)

NADIA is an introductory episode for a serial of undetermined length. I would like to know just how many episodes of this story exist, because it is actually quite appealing. Set in Paris before the turn of the century, the hero is a young inventor traveling to the 1899 World's Fair to compete in an aviation contest. Once there, he quickly develops a crush on the beautiful Nadia, an exotic circus acrobat. Nadia owns an amulet which several bad guys want, and the tape sets up the plot for the entire serial. Carl Macek is credited for the English adaptation, and somehow I didn't get the sense I was missing much. The short length of the tape is bothersome, but seven additional volumes (also 25m each) are also available.

SEXTOONS

HTV Inc. (1124 S. Solano,
Las Cruces, NM 88001),
\$29.95, 70m

Oh boy! Nasty, nasty adult cartoons! My sweaty fingers were trembling as I gently slid the cassette into the waiting door of my

VCR. I turned down the sound, closed the curtains, and got ready for 70m of illicit animation. What is the attraction of combining animation and sexual material? Cartoon animation has been sold as a kiddies' medium for so long that the introduction of "adult" elements creates something instantly curious. Well, if you have the opportunity of watching this collection of "erotic" animation, keep the remote control handy, because you'll find the fast forward button to be of great use.

The shorts in this collection fall into two categories: student-made films (obvious art school projects) and anonymous stag film fodder. The student films are, unfortunately, examples of the excesses which often plague amateur productions. Many of these use sexual elements only for "shock" value, but frankly, they are boring. The worst, perhaps, is what appears to be nothing more than rotoscoped porn footage.

One good reason to watch this tape, however, is the infamous "**Buried Treasure**." This silent B&W short was made sometime during the late 1920s by obviously professional animators. There is no plot, only a series of sexual gags centered around the hero "Everready Hardon." The animation quality is a couple of steps over what you would expect, and the short is accompanied by fragments of other silent stagtoons, including footage of Ignatz the Mouse consummating his relationship with Krazy Kat.

Ironically, the print and transfer quality of this tape is quite high, although the most interesting short—a European version of the Snow White story—appears to have been excerpted from an unidentified, anti-porn documentary. It's presented without titles, with commentary by a damning narrator!



Itto Ogami (Tomisaburo Wakayama) cuts through all the nonsense in BABY CART AT THE RIVER STYX.

ASIA

By Erik Sulev

BABY CART AT THE RIVER STYX

1972, *Video Search of Miami*, \$27.90 ppd., 80m

This second installment of the incredible, six-part **Kozure Ohkami** ("Sword of Vengeance") series is the film that made up the bulk of New World Pictures' acclaimed **SHOGUN ASSASSIN** re-edit. Therefore, chances are, most of your favorite scenes are in this first sequel, directed by Kenji Misumi. Among the most memorable moments are the introduction of Sayka and her fellow female assassins, who demonstrate their abilities by swiftly dismembering a supposedly invincible Kurogawa fighter; Sayka escaping the sword of Itto Ogami (Tomisaburo Wakayama), the Lone Wolf, by literally leaping out of her kimono in a see-through body suit and, best of all, the

climactic desert battle in which the three vicious Hidari brothers—Benma, Tenma, and Kunma—meet their maker courtesy of Itto's blazing sword. This is an incredible film in an incredible series, and VSoM's English-subtitled, letterboxed edition is highly recommended viewing. My only complaint is that the subtitles credit none of the cast members but Wakayama and Akihiro Tomikawa, who plays Daigoro, his young son. I'd love to know the identities of the other Japanese actors as well. This criticism aside, this high-quality conversion is still the most convenient way to properly view the infamous "whistling throat sound" in all its glory.

BABY CART TO HADES

1972, *Video Search of Miami*, \$27.90 ppd., 88m

This third "Sword of Vengeance" film (whose original Japanese title translates as "Flying on the Wind of Death in a Baby Cart"), further chronicles

the adventures of Itto Ogami and his son Diagoro (Tomisaburo Wakayama and Akihiro Tomikawa). It graphically details the lone samurai's actions when he finds himself in the middle of a power struggle between a regional landlord and governor. As if Ogami's **YOJIMBO**-inspired strategy of playing both sides against the other doesn't litter the soil with enough corpses, he must also deal with Gunbei Yamue, a disgraced samurai who seeks absolution through death, but finds this difficult since his swordsmanship is nearly equal to that of Ogami, the former royal executioner.

With each sequel to the *Kozure Ohkami* series, viewers are able to glimpse more facets of Ogami's oblique personality. The protection he extends to a young girl, who has killed her brutish husband after being sold into marriage, further illustrates the code of honor that guides his actions; this is one of the most involving passages of the film. Director Kenji Misumi, not forgetting the types of thrills that fans of this series want to see, builds to an explosive battle of swords and firearms, and drops the curtain on a POV shot—taken from the perspective of a freshly decapitated head!

VSoM's conversion copy has good picture quality and is fully letterboxed at 2.35:1. As always, the English subtitles are a godsend, and add greatly to a *Gai-jin*'s enjoyment of the film.

MR. VAMPIRE 1992

1992, Cantonese Bootleg
(also LD), LB, 84m

No **MR. VAMPIRE** sequel or imitation has come close to capturing the original's blend of outrageous action and comedy. Ricky Lau's sequel also falls short, even though the original cast returns, joined by the enjoyable (and loud!)

Sandra Ng as a spiritualist. This time, Sifu Lam Ching Ying and his two inept disciples are determined to thwart another squad of hopping vampires, as well as battling a wayward Holy Baby, the vengeful spirit of an aborted fetus. Lau provides several effective moments, including an encounter with a ghostly caravan at the crossroads, as well as a valuable lesson about how to fight an enraged vampire when crippled with diarrhea—sound effects included! Perhaps the overfamiliarity of the **MR. VAMPIRE** formula, combined with unwelcome attempts to make the vampires more comical than frightening, hampers the film's effectiveness; the finished product doesn't have the zing that it should. The quality of the bootleg tape is so-so, and at times the English subtitles blur, inflicting acute eye-strain. Also, the film is presented in a 1.33:1 aspect ratio, with the picture occasionally off-center.

NAKED KILLER

1992, World Video, NSR, 86m

The perfect vehicle for its leading lady, the baby-faced Ching My Yau, **NAKED KILLER** is an entertaining blend of Category III sex and violence that, while utterly implausible, remains one of the most entertaining erotic action films from HK in quite awhile. After a blaze of violence against her father's killer, Kitty (Ching) is rescued and recruited by an older female assassin to be her student. The unexpected death of the teacher (at the lips of her lesbian lover, a former student) brings this arrangement to an early end, however, and Kitty and her policeman lover (Simon Yam) are forced into a final battle against a female assassin of superior ability. **NAKED KILLER** is filled with the requisite amounts of sex and violence, all of which are paced exceptionally well.

Director Clarence Fok Yiu Leung knows not to take his material too seriously and injects generous bits of humor that, while perhaps questionable by Western standards, seem perfectly appropriate in this context.

NAKED KILLER is also available in Mandarin language from ERA Video, where its softcore lesbian groping sequences are sure to be trimmed to suit Taiwanese standards. Stick with this Cantonese release, which is subtitled and letterboxed at 1.75:1. A laserdisc release by the same company is imminent.



BLOOD RELATIVES

1977, CIC Video, HF/OP, 94m 26s

Homicide and incest are the themes of this Canada/France co-production directed by Claude Chabrol, which uses an Ed McBain novel as its source. After a young woman witnesses the murder of her cousin (Lisa Langlois), she identifies the killer as her brother, who had been carrying on a secret sexual relationship with the victim. When the dead girl's diary is found, the inspector assigned to the case (Donald Sutherland, in a role not unlike his part in **KLUTE**) soon finds that there is much more to this open-and-shut case than meets the eye. Chabrol takes the police procedural aspects of McBain's novel and uses the characters' predominantly Catholic background to create a palpable aura of deception and forbidden sexual yearnings. The resulting mixture works quite well, but the director's refusal to wallow in the more exploitable opportunities suggested by this plotline may explain why this film had such limited

theatrical play. As with many Canadian films, the dialog of the predominantly French cast (including Stephane Audran) has been given an English post-sync that detracts from the otherwise high quality of the production. David Hemmings and Donald Pleasance (as a child molester) are effective in supporting roles. The transfer is murky and blurred, not much of an improvement on the one released by Astral Video in the early '80s.

THE LOST WORLD

1992, C/FP Video #11410, HF, NSR (approx. \$80 Canadian), 96m 57s

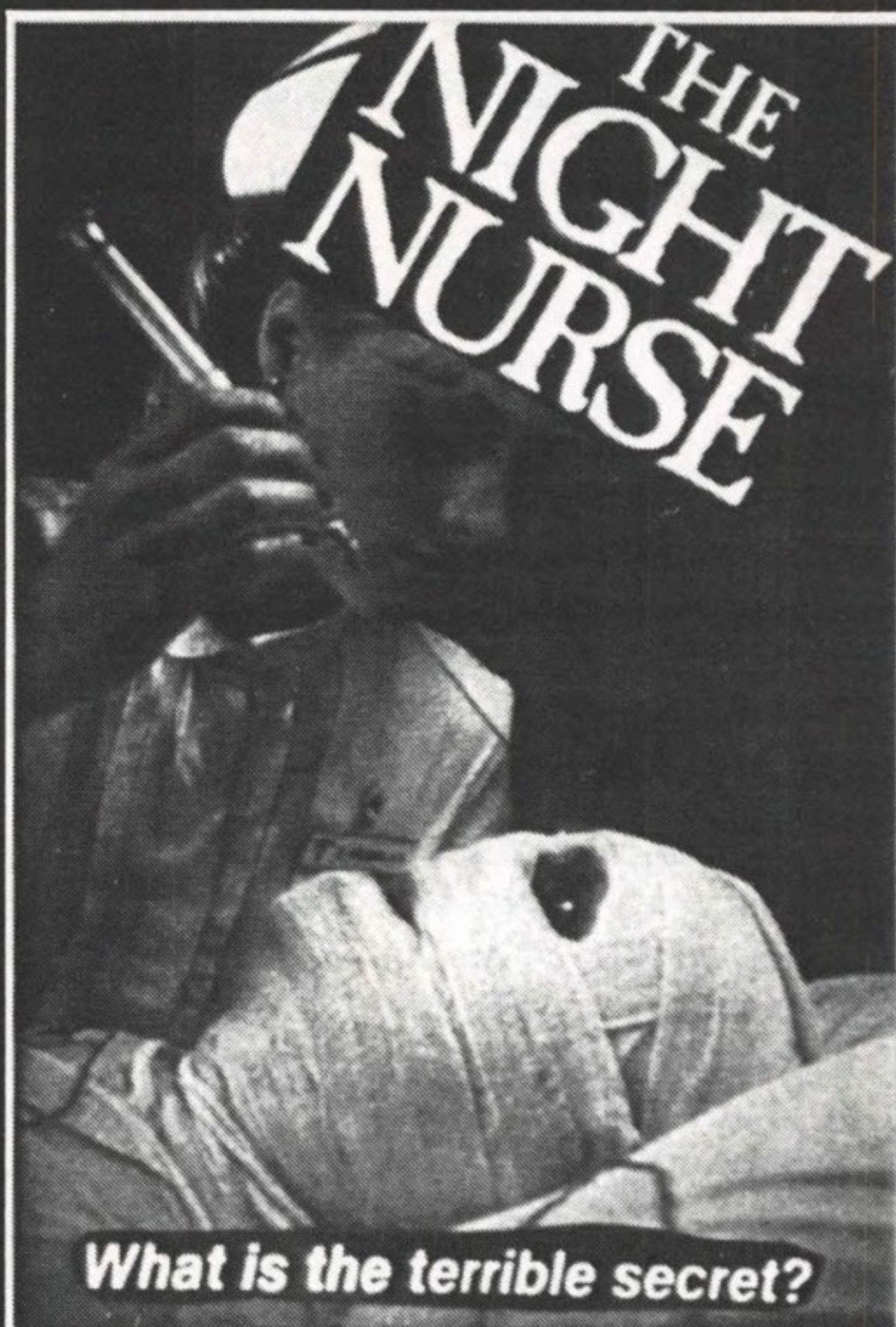
The prolific Harry Alan Towers wrote and produced this British/Canadian co-production, which is so utterly retrograde in technique and execution, one could swear that it had dropped out of a 1950s time warp. While on expedition in 1912 Africa, Professor Challenger (John Rhys-Davies) stumbles upon

a remote plateau that is home to various forms of prehistoric life. When his claims are refuted by the British scientific community, a second excursion is mounted by the skeptical Professor Summerlee (David Warner), whose group soon encounters the usual stock characters and standard issue perils found in this genre. Anyone who has sat through more than a couple of Towers' productions expects very little from anything bearing his name (or that of his

Canadian Video Consumer Alert!

The box art for GWN Video's NIGHT NURSE and THE KILLING OF SATAN make use of stills from DEAD AND BURIED and THE HOUSE BY THE CEMETERY, but are not retitlings of those films!

—Thanks to Lorne Marshall, Glen Burnie MD



AN INEXPLICABLY
SINISTER AFFAIR



UP FROM THE BOWELS OF
HELL, THE BEAST COMES

RAMON REVILLA
ELIZABETH OROPESA

"Peter Welbeck" pseudonym, which earns yet another screen-writing credit here). Even with his previous accomplishments in mind, the wretched, low-bid SPFX work is truly astonishing: the rubbery handpuppets terrorizing the cast make Irwin Allen's 1960 version look like **JURASSIC PARK** in comparison. Initially, it seems that director Timothy Bond (**DEADLY HARVEST**) is striving to create a nostalgic throwback to the low-budget safari movies of yore and, for its first half hour, **THE LOST WORLD** is quite enjoyable. However, before long, sentiment vanishes and tedium takes over. The source print is already somewhat worn and the non-anamorphic image is mildly cropped. A sequel, **RETURN TO THE LOST WORLD**, was shot simultaneously and is due on tape soon.

MATINEE

1989, Malofilm Video #FRM-089, HF/S, \$29.99 (Canadian), 92m 59s

Consumer Alert! This is not the wonderful new Joe Dante film but, rather, a not-so-wonderful old Canadian thriller about a psychopath knocking off the patrons of a small-town horror film festival—a plot that pre-dates Mark Herrier's **POPCORN** by a year. During a screening of "MURDER CAMP" (an homage to the original **FRIDAY THE 13TH**, which features a re-creation of Kevin Bacon's spear-through-the-neck murder), a male patron is found dead in his seat. In typical slasher movie fashion, the film picks up "Two Years Later" with the harried theatre manager (TWIN PEAKS' Don Davis) staging another festival in spite of anonymous notes which threaten more violence. Could the killer be... the heroine's repressed mother? The young rebel-without-a-clue who doesn't fit in? The gay projectionist who has seen too many horror

films for his own good? Writer/director Richard Martin does a competent job, but the film is sorely lacking in style, suspense, and interesting characters. Of much greater interest are the films-within-the film, which include "NO ESCAPE" (an MTV-style vampire yarn), "THE SLEEP-WALKER" (a silent nod to Robert Wiene's **THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI**) and "BAD BLOOD II" (a **TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE** retread). Posters for authentic Malofilm releases—like **PIN, HIDE AND GO SHRIEK** and **FRANKENSTEIN GENERAL HOSPITAL**—decorate Davis' office and a promo tape features a clip from the warped Canadian gore cartoon "Lupo the Butcher." Incidentally, the title **MATINEE** is completely meaningless in this instance, as all of the screenings take place at night. The transfer is fine in all respects.

THE NIGHT CHILD

1974, PDV/Cocktail Video, LB/OP, 88m 36s

This Massimo ("Max") Dalla-mano film—originally titled **THE CURSED MEDALLION** [*Il Medaglione Insanguinato*, "The Bloody Medallion"]—stars Richard Johnson as a BBC director filming a documentary about Satanic imagery in historic paintings. While on location in Spoleto with his neurotic daughter (**BARON BLOOD**'s Nicoletta Elmi) in tow, he discovers an abandoned villa that harbors a particularly ominous canvas. In spite of warnings from a local psychic (Lila Kedrova), he decides to make this painting the centerpiece of his film. His daughter starts displaying signs of madness, leading to unexplainable phenomena and murder. While a demon does indeed seem to possess the girl, this is not the **EXORCIST** clone that its reputation would lead the

viewer to expect. However, the proceedings are too deliberately paced and uneventfully plotted to be of more than passing interest (though in all fairness, the opening credits suggest that there may have been some post-production tinkering). Still, there are enough assets here, including some nice atmosphere and Stelvio Cipriani's lyrical score, to recommend this to Euro horror fanatics. Alas, one of the film's most obvious strengths—Franco Delli Colli's location photography—is ruined by a dreadful video transfer. Joanna Cassidy appears in an early role as Johnson's assistant/lover. The framing alternates between 1.33 and approximately 1.50:1 throughout.

TURKEY

By Peter Blumenstock

Now that the long hidden treasures of the Italian, Spanish, Mexican, and Asian film industries have begun to receive their long overdue recognition, it's time to penetrate the mysteries of the Turkish exploitation movie world.

During the heyday of Turkish filmmaking in the 1970s, over 300 productions were completed annually—more than in Italy or Spain—but few were ever projected abroad. As is the case with Greek and East Indian films, Turkish film history is now far too unwieldy to be discussed comprehensively or with any real authority; it is almost as impossible to compile reasonably complete filmographies of Turkish directors, producers, and actors. Even in their country of origin, Turkish horror, comedy, and action films have never been considered worth mentioning, studying, or preserving. The popular Turkish cinema exists only to serve an uncaring public, without any artistic ambition to create



Somebody call CINEFANTASTIQUE! Turkish comedian Turlst Ömer meets "Kaptan Kirk" (Cemil Sahbaz) and "Mr. Spak" (Erol Amaç) In UZAY YOLUNDA!

something more than the sum of its parts within its severe commercial limitations.

The Turkish film industry is incredibly prolific, yet highly disorganized and lacking resources at every corner—no studios, no sets, no adequate technical equipment, and often without skilled personnel in front of, or behind, the camera. In comparison with Anatolia's celluloid adventurers, Italian companies could be accurately described as a precise clockwork, spending more on trash than could be placed at the disposal of a Turkish director to produce 20 films in a row! A typical dolly on a Turkish film set is a simple armchair with pieces of soap glued beneath its legs. Inventiveness is everything, and this fact is what makes the Turkish video phenomenon so highly enjoyable.

While most Turkish B-movies admittedly lack adequate technical realization (including terrible cinematography, continuity mistakes and crude editing), most of

them try to compensate for their amateurism—perhaps only coincidentally, one must confess—with a charming naïveté and the simple joy of creating cinema without any visible means of support. The standard Turkish pic looks like the work of a child who has found a Super 8mm camera under the Christmas tree. However, Turkish cinema is more approachable than, say, its East Indian counterpart. Though a cultural barrier cannot be denied—Turkey is, after all, an Islamic country with a peculiar approach to humor and morality—their productions employ the same cinematic language of rhythm and suspense as western productions.

While most Turkish productions remain unavailable on tape in their native country, due to a heavy lack of interest, tons of them are turning up on small (often semi-professional) Turkish labels in Germany. These first surfaced at the time of the big video boom in the early 1980s to

supply West Germany's Turkish community with a little bit of native culture, a twist of fate that was probably responsible for saving hundreds of these movies from extinction. Few of Istanbul's film companies have survived; consequently, the majority of tapes still sitting in Turkish export/import video shops in Germany, Great Britain, Belgium and France can be acquired for under \$7, even those which are still factory sealed.

However, please be warned. While most VW readers may feel like kicking the furniture when the latest obscure discovery looks washed-out or severely cropped, those who wish to sample the following "Turkish delights" must leave such criteria behind. No matter what genre you rent or buy, you are virtually guaranteed to see an absolutely ruined print—incredibly splicy, missing the beginning or end, and scratched beyond presentability. Signs of chemical decomposition are also steady



The Devil makes Canan Perver do it in the Turkish EXORCIST rip-off, SEYTAN.

companions, turning some parts of the celluloid positive back to negative again! Some Turkish films from the late 1970s appear on video in black and white. They may have been shot like that; then again, maybe not. Who knows, and the pity is, we probably will never know. The following reviews should provide a decent overview what might be expected from a dip into "Türkman Sinema."

SEYTAN

"Devil"

1974, Saner Video, approx. \$7

While Argentina has Emilio Vieyra, Brazil José Mojica Marins and Spain Paul Naschy, it isn't so easy to find a comparable purveyor of the horror cinema in Turkey. The fantastic is a steady companion when exploring Turkish exploitation cinema, whether it be in a comedy, fairy tale, or action/comedy-inspired mold. During the late '60s, Killing—the famous masked hero of a series of

violent, sexy, Italian photo-novels (that sometimes featured appearances by legendary Italian exploitation star Paul Muller)—made his Turkish screen debut in Nuri Akinci's *Killing Karsl Frankenstein* ("Killing vs. Frankenstein," 1967). Other superheroes reached the screen during this period—including Spiderman, Superman, Captain America, Mandrake the Magician, even a Turkish El Santo!—and comedian Türist Ömer had the pleasure of meeting the crew of the Starship Enterprise during one of his Anatolian adventures, Hulki Saner's *Uzay Yolunda* (1978)!

However, it seems that only two real terror films have ever been made in Turkey. Three years before Riccardo Freda reanimated the Italian horror cinema with *I Vampiri* in 1956, Mehmet Muhtar brought Bram Stoker's "Dracula" to the Turkish screen. *Dracula Istanbul'da*, now considered a lost film, played in Istanbul theaters to remarkable popular and

critical praise, yet it failed to inspire a school of horror filmmaking. Interest in the genre disappeared, and it took two decades before another Turkish producer dared to invest his money into fright fare, inspired by the boom of "demonic possession" films in Spain and Italy after the tremendous, international box office success of William Friedkin's *THE EXORCIST* (1973). Though Friedkin's film played in Turkey as well, one cannot deny that a film based on Catholic faith and fears appears somewhat misplaced in an Islamic country, where other devils are required to make audiences shiver.

A serious attempt to work within a genre that experienced absolutely no cultural development over the decades, *Seytan* chooses (rather unimaginatively) to stick to the "original" in every single frame. Simply replacing all Christian symbols with substitutions of Islamic origin, it otherwise follows William Peter Blatty's *EXORCIST* screenplay page by page. Thanks to

Turkey's liberal copyright regulations, director Metin Erksan even borrows Mike Oldfield's "Tubular Bells" theme for the soundtrack! The special effects scenes are okay, but the priest's first confrontation with Pazuzu in the desert, makes use of a gigantic puppet with two horns, red eyes and a blue fur that makes him look more like a monstrous teddy bear! Though frequently too cheap to be credible, *Seytan* is undoubtedly a Turkish upper class production, including good photography and editing, as well as an acceptable performance by Canan Perver (star of several Viking and *peplum* efforts in later years) as the possessed child. Sadly, Saner Video's transfer is hardly worth recommending. Transferred from a splicy, faded print, full of heavy scratches, this pre-record looks suspiciously like a fourth-generation dupe, complete with unstable color, drop-outs, and a variety of damages reproduced from the video master. Adding insult to injury, the main title sequence is missing, and crudely replaced by hand-printed cards and a photo of the video box! [Also available from Video Search of Miami, \$27.90 ppd.]

TARKAN-VIKING KANI

"Tarkan-Viking Blood"
197?, IMWA, approx. \$7

While most European cinema tends to regard the Islamic religion as either dangerous or mysterious, Turkish films confront Christianity as the offspring of evil, perversion, and violence. There are hardly any Turkish sword-and-sandal films without Christian henchmen at work, dressed in black suits with giant red crosses stuck on their fat bellies, raping and killing children and women and enslaving the men until... yes, until some heroic freedom fighter shows up to crush the barbaric invaders! During the '70s, countless films about

freedom fighters were produced—such as *Battal Gazi* or *Haci Murat*, and also the Kara Murat series, which consists of six films (*Devler Savaslyor, Kara Murat Fatih'in Fedaisi, Kak Sovalyeye Karşı, Denizler Hakımı, Hak-anlar Carplılyor, Olum Emri*). Natuk Baytan's first entries in the Kara Murat series were extremely successful (even sold to other countries such as Germany and France!), so producer Türker Inanoglu decided to get some Italian money by hiring actress Daniela Giordano (star of countless Italian B-films including Mario Bava's *FOUR TIMES THAT NIGHT* [*Quante Volte Quella Notte*, 1968]) to star in one of director Herb Al Bauer's subsequent Kara Murat adventures. Five films in the extremely popular Tarkan series were made in

the mid-'70s, each of them taking place in a different country and culture. Though technically not as well-made as Inanoglu's other productions, the Tarkan films never fail to entertain, due to their wild mixtures of fantasy, martial arts and horror elements. Raised and suckled by wolves (which makes him virtually invincible, the films explain) after his village and family were slaughtered by invading hordes, Tarkan grows up and becomes a strong, idealistic fighter for justice. He and his dog Kurt travel the world, to help the innocent where help is needed. *Tarkan*—the first in the series and the only one directed by Necati Ilktaş (rather than genre specialist Mehmet Aslan)—confronts him with Roman legions, *Tarkan Gümüş Eyer* tells the origin of the brown haired hero,



involving a sorceress (played by busty Turkish starlet Eva Bender), **Tarkan Güçlü Kahraman** takes him to China where he must face a bunch of Kung Fu fighters (needless to say, no Chinese actors appear and their Anatolian substitutes are hardly convincing), and in **Tarkan Altın Madalyon**, the "best friend of Attila" (a description hauled out to impress us at the beginning of every Tarkan movie) has to face an evil sorceress, resurrected by virgin blood in a scene with obvious origins in the Italian gothic horrors of the '60s.

The best of the series, however, is easily **Tarkan Viking Kanı**, due to its delirious deluge of crazy, entertaining ideas. In this one, a bunch of evil Vikings kidnap maidens to sacrifice in honor of a giant killer octopus (a rubber monster with painted eyes, animated with rough shakes from beneath) until Tarkan—accompanied by a big, lovesick Cyclops, who loses his heart to one of the octopus' designated victims—attacks the Nordic brutes and brings a bloody end to their ceremonies. While it's obvious that Aslan is not a talented director and the cameraman (probably Necati Ilktaş) never bothered to learn his craft, **Tarkan Viking Kanı** offers enough weird mayhem to keep every camp-follower pleased, including some gross violence, incredible costume design, and bizarre art direction. Kartal Tibet, who played Tarkan in all five films, starred in several other epic adventure films (such as Aslan's **Karaoglan Gellyor**), as well as romance dramas and police actioners. The music is a compilation of library music, and Tarkan's theme music can also be heard in some of the Kara Murat films. Previously released on the "Türk Kan" label, this re-release from IMWA offers the usual, dreadful quality, but it can easily be found as IMWA enjoys nationwide distribution in Germany. The same label has also

released **Tarkan Gümüş Eyer** and **Tarkan Altın Madalyon**.

KÜÇÜK KOVBOY

"Little Cowboy"


1977, Minareci Video, approx. \$10

When the big Spaghetti Western boom came to its end in the '70s, the Turks realized (a bit late) that Anatolia would be a perfect and affordable playground for outlaws, bandits and nihilistic revenge tales. Approximately 20 Turkish westerns were made during the late '70s, each one a carbon-copy of the standard Spaghetti Western scenario about an unshaved hero returning to a town from his past to settle old scores, and the music stolen (without exception) from soundtrack albums by Ennio Morricone, Bruno Nicolai and other Italian composers. (In this case, it's mainly Morricone's score for Sergio Corbucci's **THE MERCENARY** [*Il Mercenario*, 1968].)

It is curious to note that, while certain Turkish companies tried to openly co-produce with Italy—resulting in pictures such as Antonio Margheriti's **YOR, HUNTER FROM THE FUTURE** [*Il Mondo di Yor*, "The World of Yor," 1983], or Sergio Garrone's ultra-obscure Klaus Kinski vehicles **Le Amanti del Mostro** and **La Mano che Nutre la Morte** (both 1974)—only one Italian director found his fortune in Istanbul: Guido Zurli. Mainly recognized for his Italian action and erotic pictures (such as **La Vergine di Bali**, "The Virgin of Bali," 1972, starring gorgeous Lea Lander), Zurli shot—unknownst to almost everybody—one of the best Turkish westerns ever: **Küçük Kovboy**. (It should be mentioned that certain Italian reference books give **Cow Boy** as the Italian production title for this film. However, the film shows no traces of being a co-production, so it is quite unlikely that any Italian money was involved, despite the

involvement of an Italian director and actors.) The plot concerns a gunman, who accidentally shoots a child during a duel with an outlaw and becomes a drunkard. Eventually a woman, whose son has been kidnapped by the same outlaw, weans him from alcohol so that he can rescue her child and take revenge for what happened in the past.

While there is no doubt that Zurli's Italian films are of much better technical quality, **Küçük Kovboy** is an enjoyable curiosity in the endless list of Eurowesterns. Supplied with unusually professional production values (by Turkish standards), Zurli's film features a remarkable cast, including *peplum* star Alan Steel (aka Sergio Ciani), Italian B-queen Evelyn Stewart (aka Ida Galli), child actor Ilker Inanoglu (the son of Türker Inanoglu, one of the biggest Turkish film producers of the '70s), as well as Cüneyt Arkin. The latter, easily the best Turkish actor around, appeared in more than 100 pictures in every genre (Arkin played the lead in the **Kara Murat** and **Battal Gazi** series, sometimes under the pseudonym "George Arkin"), and could have held his own on an international level as an actor and stuntman. Zurli's other Turkish efforts include the Italian coproduction **Il Piccolo Testimone dell'Orient Express** ("The Little Witness of the Orient Express," 1977), a *giallo*, once again starring Inanoglu's exceptionally untalented son (hiding under the silly *nom d'écran* "Dicky Dicky"!) as a tricky little ragamuffin who is endangered after witnessing a murder.

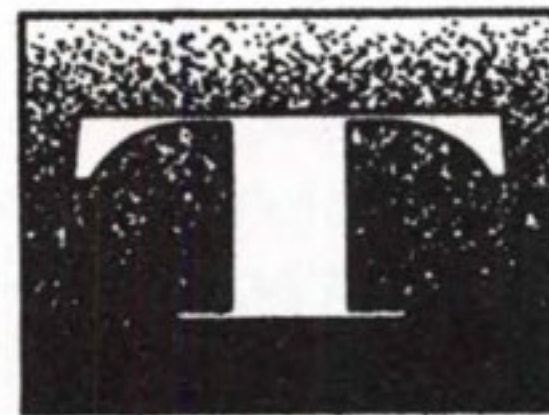
Minareci Video's **Küçük Kovboy** is a full screen transfer and looks somewhat cropped. Apart from some minor, recurring sound problems, the picture quality is acceptable and well above average when compared to other releases from the same company. 

DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF UNICORNS?

The 7 Faces of BLADE RUNNER

By Paul M. Sammon

*Excerpts from the Screenplay
by Hampton Fancher and David Peoples
©1982 Blade Runner Partnership*



THROUGHOUT 1981 and most of 1982, I witnessed the birth pangs of a seminal motion picture: **BLADE RUNNER**.

This good fortune arose from purely professional circumstances. Early in 1981, I was assigned by OMNI to cover the making of **BLADE RUNNER** in a series of articles, and the filmmakers behind this \$25 million film gave me unlimited access to their dauntingly ambitious production. I was on-site throughout much of the film's preproduction period, personally examining script rewrites and conceptual art. In short, I was **BLADE RUNNER's** Boswell, able to both observe the intricate postproduction special effects work of Douglas



Trumbull's then-existing EEG company and to attend special sneak previews of the film.

BLADE RUNNER was directed by British hyperdetailist Ridley Scott, fresh off the success of his gothic science fiction hit **ALIEN** (1979). It starred Harrison Ford, a hot property *via* **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK** (1980) and **RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK** (1981), and its storyline was adapted from the 1968 novel *DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?*, a complex rumination on the effects of dehumanization by that master of paranoid alternate realities, noted science fiction author Philip K. Dick.

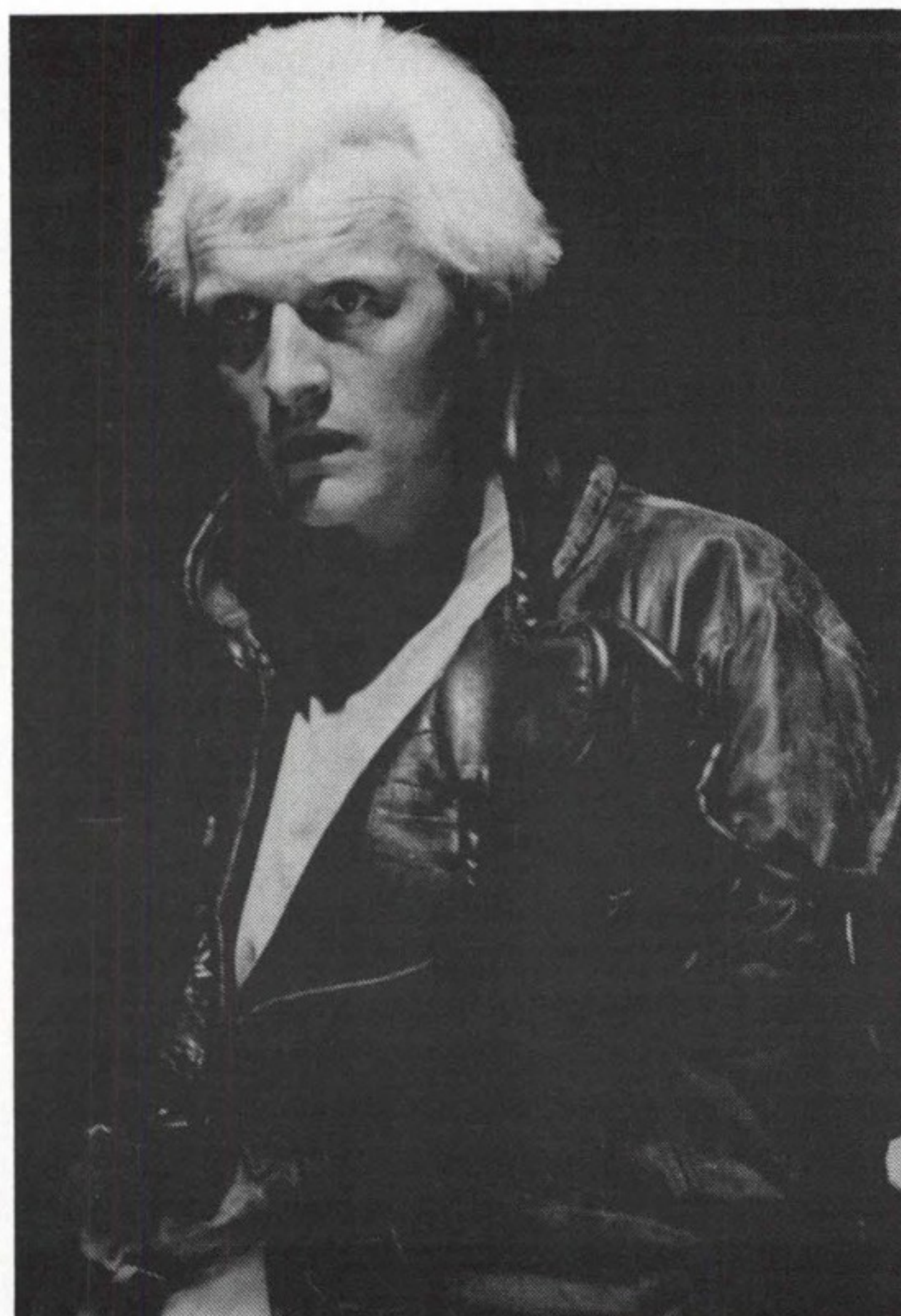
Unfortunately, and despite these stellar talents, when **BLADE RUNNER** was finally released on

June 25, 1982, the film grossed only \$14 million; it was a boxoffice flop. Many reasons were put forth for this failure. Perhaps it was the fact that this darkly-visioned film was released during the feel-good summer of **E.T.: THE EXTRA TERRESTRIAL**. Perhaps it was **BLADE RUNNER**'s downbeat, morally ambiguous plot, which concerned 21st century cop Rick Deckard (Ford)'s attempts to "retire" four murderous "replicants" (Rutger Hauer, Joanna Cassidy, Daryl Hannah, Brion James), synthetic

*Rick Deckard "remembers" this outtake footage from Ridley Scott's **LEGEND** in Ridley Scott's **BLADE RUNNER: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT**.*



Harrison Ford as 2019 bounty hunter Deckard.



Rutger Hauer as Nexus 6 ringleader, Roy Batty.

beings whose primary crime is simply aspiring to be human. Or perhaps the film's failure could be simply laid at the feet of an audience unwilling to embrace a melancholy performance from a leading star whose previous triumphs had mostly been in upbeat entertainments.

Whatever the reasons, I soon became fascinated by the manner in which the film's dystopian subtexts of alienation, rebellion and humiliation, uncomfortably reflected the day-to-day realities of those straining to bring them to the screen. It wasn't a pretty sight. There were neverending script rewrites. Feuds between performers. Clashes between director and crew. So many myriad tensions, in fact, that the film's intensive atmosphere of anxiety and exhaustion led many of those connected with the project to sarcastically dub it "Blood Runner."

The physical/psychological tortures endured by the **BLADE RUNNER** crew have been amply documented, most recently by Lance Loud in the October 1992 issue of *DETAILS* magazine. However, what has *not* been so well detailed is the fact that **BLADE RUNNER** wears many faces. Despite the recent home video release of **BLADE RUNNER**:

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT—a version that removes Ford's controversial voice-over narration while adding a mystifying "unicorn" shot—one shouldn't surmise that only two versions of the film exist. In fact, there are actually *seven* different cuts of **BLADE RUNNER**. And all have been shown to the general public.

Some of these alternate versions are still available. Others hover in cinematic limbo.

It all began, for me, in San Diego...

FACE #1 THE SAN DIEGO PREVIEW CUT

115m

In early June 1982, after spending nearly 18 months covering the making of the film, I settled into a plush seat at San Diego's Cinema 21 theater to watch what would be the last sneak preview of **BLADE RUNNER** before its official theatrical release.

Two other **BLADE RUNNER** sneaks had been held a few weeks earlier—in Dallas, Texas and Denver, Colorado. Both had gone badly; audiences had not expected the adventurous star of **RAIDERS**



Daryl Hannah as Nexus 6 pleasure model, Pris.



Sean Young as the experimental replicant, Rachael.

OF THE LOST ARK to appear in such a dour project. Still, the San Diego audience would essentially see the same Dallas/Denver preview print.

With one notable exception.

The previous preview crowds had expressed confusion with Scott's original ending (the elevator doors at Deckard's apartment slamming shut in Rachael and Deckard's faces), so a decision had been made to reshoot the film's climax. Now, for the first time, viewers would see Deckard and Rachael (Sean Young) driving through a lush countryside (utilizing discarded aerial footage from Kubrick's **THE SHINING**) as Deckard mused on the fact that his companion was a special replicant who did not have a built-in four year lifespan.

The 115m San Diego Preview Cut (timed by me on a stopwatch) was quite similar to what would be eventually released as the official theatrical version of the film. However, two *extra* bits of footage beside the new climax were included in the San Diego Cut, which were subsequently dropped before the film's release; they have never been seen since. Although both were minor moments, this deleted footage contributed some additional seasoning to Scott's exotic stew.

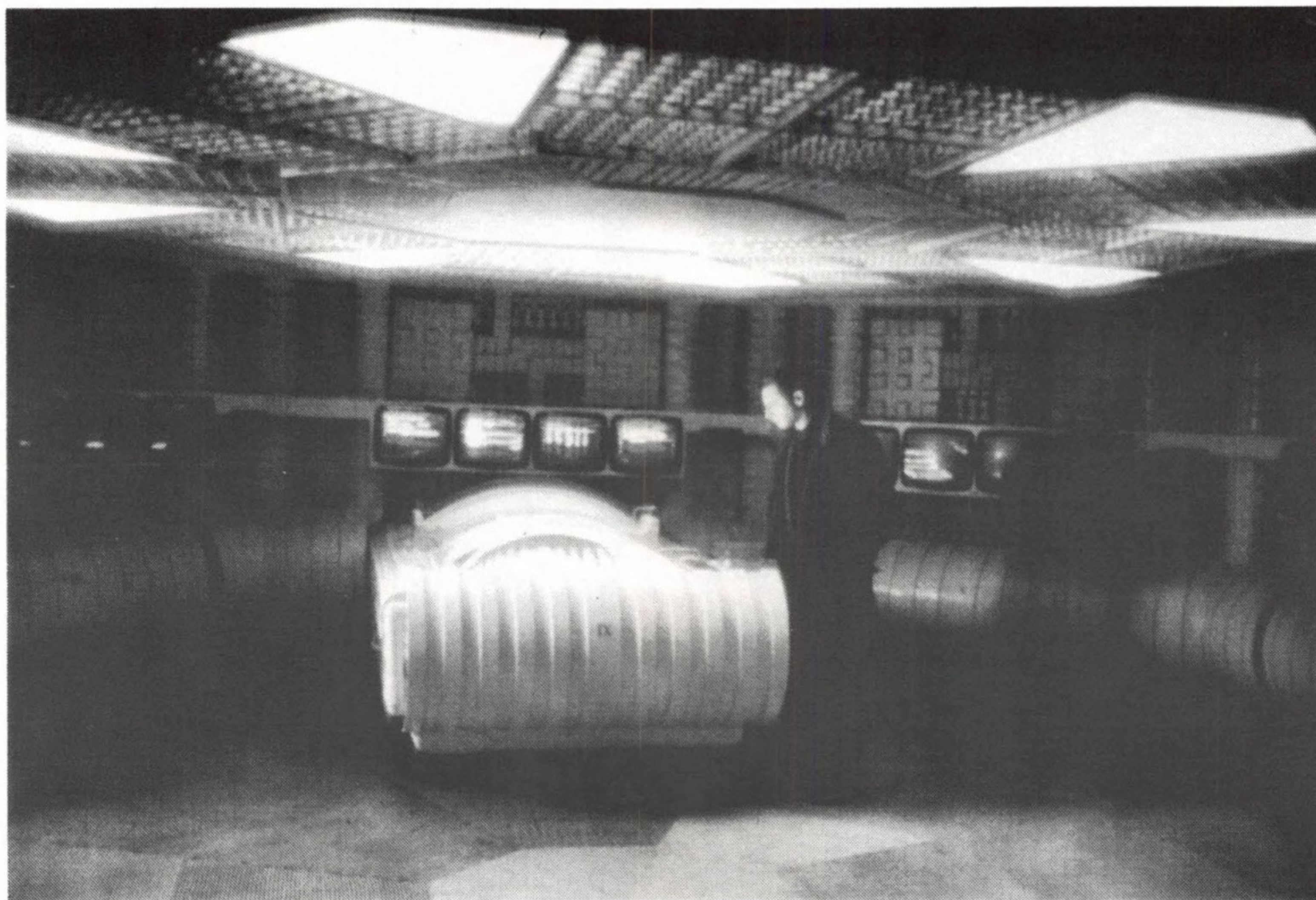
In order to pinpoint the exact moments when these missing elements occurred in **BLADE RUNNER**'s storyline, I will now refer to Warner Home Video's **DIRECTOR'S CUT** laserdisc, indicating those chapters where this deleted footage would have appeared:

Side 1: Chapter 9 Chew's Visitors

In the Director's Cut (and all other versions of the film), Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer) is first introduced through a closeup of his spasming hand, a subtle indication that his life span is nearing its end. A moment later, Batty steps out of a large glass capsule to confer with fellow replicant Leon (Brion James) about the loss of some incriminating photographs.

But what *is* that capsule? The San Diego Preview Cut answered that question by showing that Batty was placing a call in a glass-encased VidPhōn booth. Batty had placed a call to Chew (James Hong), the Tyrell Corporation's designer of replicant eyes, and as soon as Chew came on line, Batty hung up, satisfied that his target was at work in the Eye World laboratory.

This sequence was then followed by the closeup



Two views of Deckard visiting Holden (Morgan Paull) in the deleted hospital scene.

of Batty's convulsing hand, and the scene played out as usual.

4:3 "Proud of Yourself, Little Man?"

During the final showdown between Deckard and Batty in replicant designer J.F. Sebastian (William Sanderson)'s apartment, the Blade Runner is shown standing against a decaying wall streaming with rainwater. Batty suddenly punches through that wall, grabs Deckard's hand, and breaks two of his fingers.

One bit of visual information was added to this sequence in the San Diego Cut—just before Batty punches through the wall, Deckard was shown *reloading* his large-gauge handgun (in actuality, a redressed German flare pistol). This was a logical action since Deckard had previously squeezed off a number of shots, ones that killed Pris (Daryl Hannah) and missed Batty in a doorway of Sebastian's decaying flat.

Presumably, this "reloading shot" was dropped to tighten the overall tension of the scene.

These two shots were the only footage edited out of the print between its San Diego sneak and **BLADE RUNNER**'s theatrical premiere.

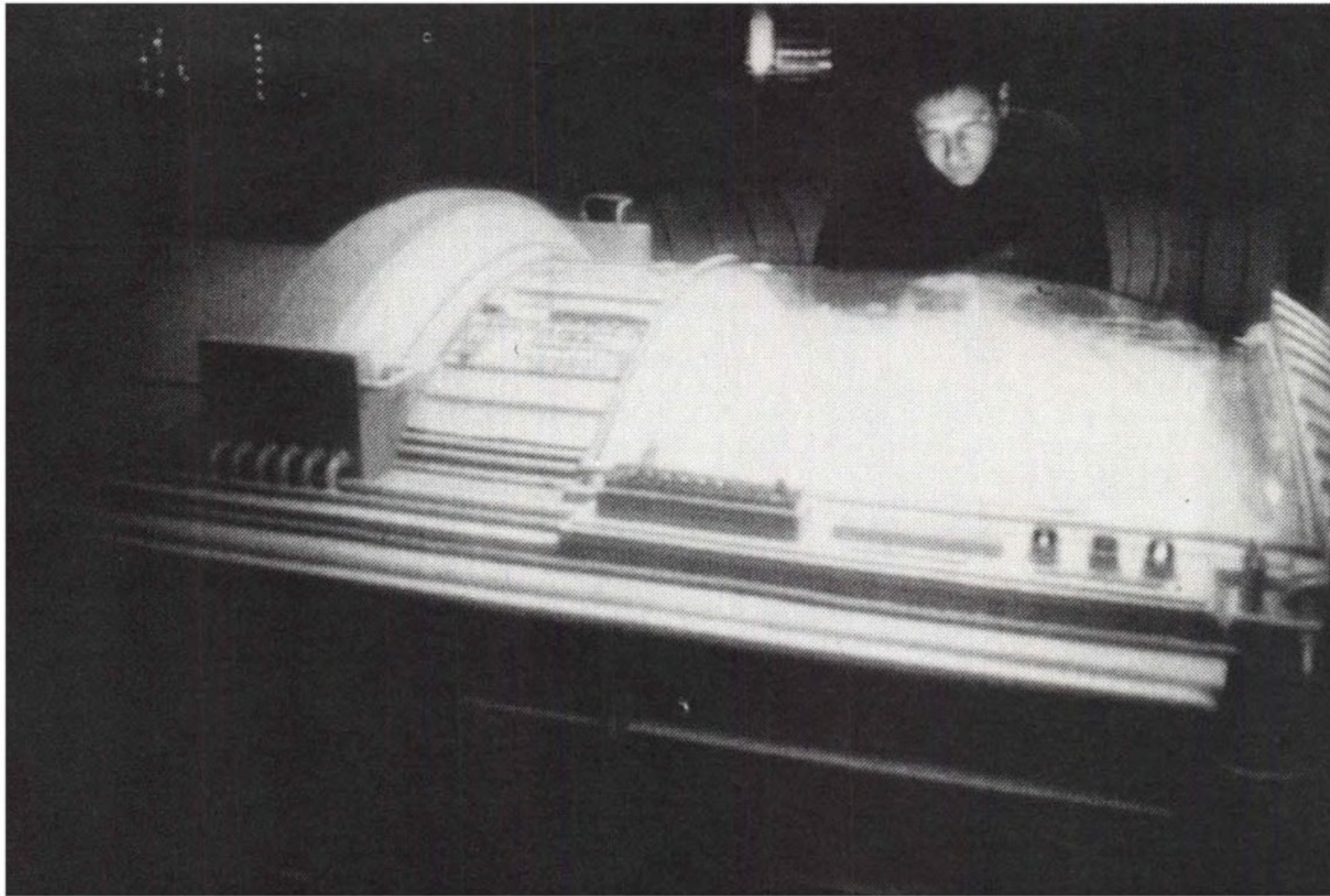
However, in the interest of film history, it is interesting to note that *two other complete se-*

quences—which I had previously witnessed on a Movieola in the Warner Bros. editing department—were dropped from the San Diego preview altogether. These sequences have never been included in *any* version of the film.

The lost **BLADE RUNNER** scenes concerned two visits made by Deckard to a character named Holden (Morgan Paull), the Blade Runner who is shot by Leon during the dim-witted replicant's Voight-Kampff test (an empathic procedure to detect replicants) in the Tyrell Pyramid. Both sequences took place in a futuristic hospital ward, where the wounded Holden was seen recuperating in an encapsulated iron lung.

The first deleted "Hospital Scene" occurred just before Deckard visits the Tyrell pyramid to run a Voight-Kampff test on Rachael. Referred to as Scene 13 in the "February 1981 — Revised Through May 1981" draft of the script, this first Hospital Scene was, intriguingly, quite a long one.

What follows is an excerpt from that Feb/May '81 draft, a screenplay which (for all intents and purposes) became **BLADE RUNNER**'s shooting script:



INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Small green letterforms skim soundlessly across a dark glass panel. Beneath the panel a sick, white face reads excerpts from TREASURE ISLAND, mouthing the words as they appear in front of him. It's Holden.

HOLDEN: (READING)

Holden is flat on his back in a breather, an iron-lung-type device covered with indicator lights and exotic paraphernalia. The hospital room is in complete darkness. Holden's breath comes in dark rasps as he reads. We become aware of Deckard standing in the shadows.

DECKARD: Whatcha reading?

Holden is startled, has to look in a mirror angled over his head, rolling his eyes way back to see who it is.

HOLDEN: Deckard, TREASURE ISLAND! Good to see ya, buddy. Old favourite.

Deckard looks down at Holden and doesn't say anything.

Pretty awful, huh?

DECKARD: Naw, you look great! Absolutely terrific! Never saw you look better. Jesus, you look good.

Deckard pinches Holden's cheek.

Great complexion! Suit looks really nice. Who's your tailor?

Deckard is making a joke, mocking hospital good cheer, but the touch of bitterness in his voice reveals his sympathy for Holden. Tears wet Holden's eyes.

HOLDEN: A big fucking skin job put the smash on me, wrecked me up! Looka me, for Chrissake!

Deckard works at being hard.

DECKARD: You blew it, huh?

Holden recovers from his tears and whines.

HOLDEN: It ain't like it used to be, Deck. It's tough now. These replicants aren't just a bunch of muscle

miners anymore, they're no goddamn different than you or me...

Deckard lights up and sits down, resting his elbows in the glass.

DECKARD: So what happened?

HOLDEN: Ten days ago Security at the Tyrell Corp. finds three intruders in the records room. Kills one, two get away, okay?

Deckard nods.

They do a routine autopsy on the one that got aired and... whaddya know? A skin job, one of the ones that busted out! Top drawer replicant... combat type... Nexus 6.

DECKARD: Pretty sexy, the sixes.

HOLDEN: Sexy! Three hours into the autopsy they still think they're cutting up a human. No marks, nothing. *Deckard looks impressed. Satisfied, Holden continues.*

I decided to check out all new employees at Tyrell. I test 26 boring jerks until in comes this guy Leon Somebody, nothing special but very big... (pause) Anyway...

DECKARD: You Voight-Kampff him?

Holden's eyes flutter a moment. Deckard waits. The breathing changes rhythm.

HOLDEN: Yeah! I thought maybe I was getting something... Maybe it doesn't work on these ones, Deck.

Deckard gets up and gives Holden phony good cheer.

(continuing) It's all over, it's a wipe out, they're almost us, Deck, they're a disease, they're...

DECKARD: Take it easy, take it easy... Tyrell Corp's got one. I'm gonna Vee Kay it tomorrow.

HOLDEN: Push it! Push that button!

Deckard pushes.

DECKARD: What's it for?

HOLDEN: Pain!



Joanna Cassidy as Zhora, running for dear life—what's left of it.

One supposes that the first Hospital Scene was cut because of its redundancy. After all, Deckard's boss Bryant (M. Emmet Walsh) had already briefed Deckard on the Nexus 6 infiltration of the Tyrell headquarters, and the Rachael/Voight-Kampff scene shows us what Deckard is only referencing here.

Deckard's second hospital visit, identified as Scene 88 (pp. 92-94) of the February '81 script, began with Holden laughing hysterically at the thought of Deckard almost being killed by the murderous Zhora (Joanna Cassidy) before "retiring" her. However, the reason Deckard has come to visit is to inform Holden that he has also "retired" Leon:

INT. HOSPITAL (DAY)

Holden's eyes change mood immediately at the thought of Leon but the laughter has to continue like a wind-up toy running down. Finally he can talk again.

HOLDEN: You aired him... what's funny about that?

DECKARD: Revenge. I thought you'd...
Holden interrupts, no longer amused.

HOLDEN: You don't revenge a machine, asshole! Your slicer cuts your finger, whaddya do? Punish it?
Holden looks at Deckard and lets his wisdom sink in.

You can't make a 'thing' feel sorry, Deck.

DECKARD: They're different, the new ones. That big one... he... it had feelings.

This scene then ended with Holden angrily accusing Deckard of making love to Zhora before shooting her, an action which Holden feels has prompted Deckard's new-found conscience against killing replicants.

This second Hospital Scene is also redundant, since the viewer has already witnessed Deckard's anguish over shooting Zhora in the back. However, one bit of information—Deckard's realization that Leon had feelings—is an important moment of character development, signaling a dawning spiritual crisis.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of my experience at the San Diego Preview Cut—missing and added sequences notwithstanding—concerned Deckard's narration.

At the time, I felt Ford's voiceover both slowed down the plot and forced me to interpret the film through Deckard's eyes, a type of narrative bullying which subsequently became the most criticized factor in the film. Still, **BLADE RUNNER's** use of



Deckard takes dead aim at Zhora on a crowded street.

narration did not come as any personal surprise—virtually every draft of the screenplay I had read prior to the San Diego sneak had incorporated the voiceover.

This fact immediately calls into question the assertions by **BLADE RUNNER**'s makers that the narration was a last minute *corporate* decision, one forced upon Ridley Scott and company by Warner Bros. *after* the negatively received Denver/Dallas sneaks. Ample evidence exists to dispute this allegation; in fact, I would go so far as to suggest that Deckard's narration was *always* part and parcel of the filmmaker's original intent.

To begin, the use of a weary voiceover for a cynical *film noir*—and **BLADE RUNNER** is nothing if not a futuristic *film noir*—is a time-honored cinematic device. More specifically, in an interview I conducted with author Philip K. Dick for CINEFANTASTIQUE (shortly before his sudden death on March 2, 1982), Dick had negative comments to make about Deckard's voiceover before **BLADE RUNNER** was even in the can!

"I wasn't angered by what had been cut from my novel," Dick told me, "because I know you can't transfer everything to the screen. What was

bad was the *execution* of the script. Fancher [Hampton Fancher, original **BLADE RUNNER** screenwriter and a co-Executive Producer on the film] had over-relied on the cliché-ridden Chanderesque figure, and his script opened with a hoary voiceover, like: *It was a dirty town. It was a dirty job. Somebody had to do it. I was that somebody. My name's Deckard.*"

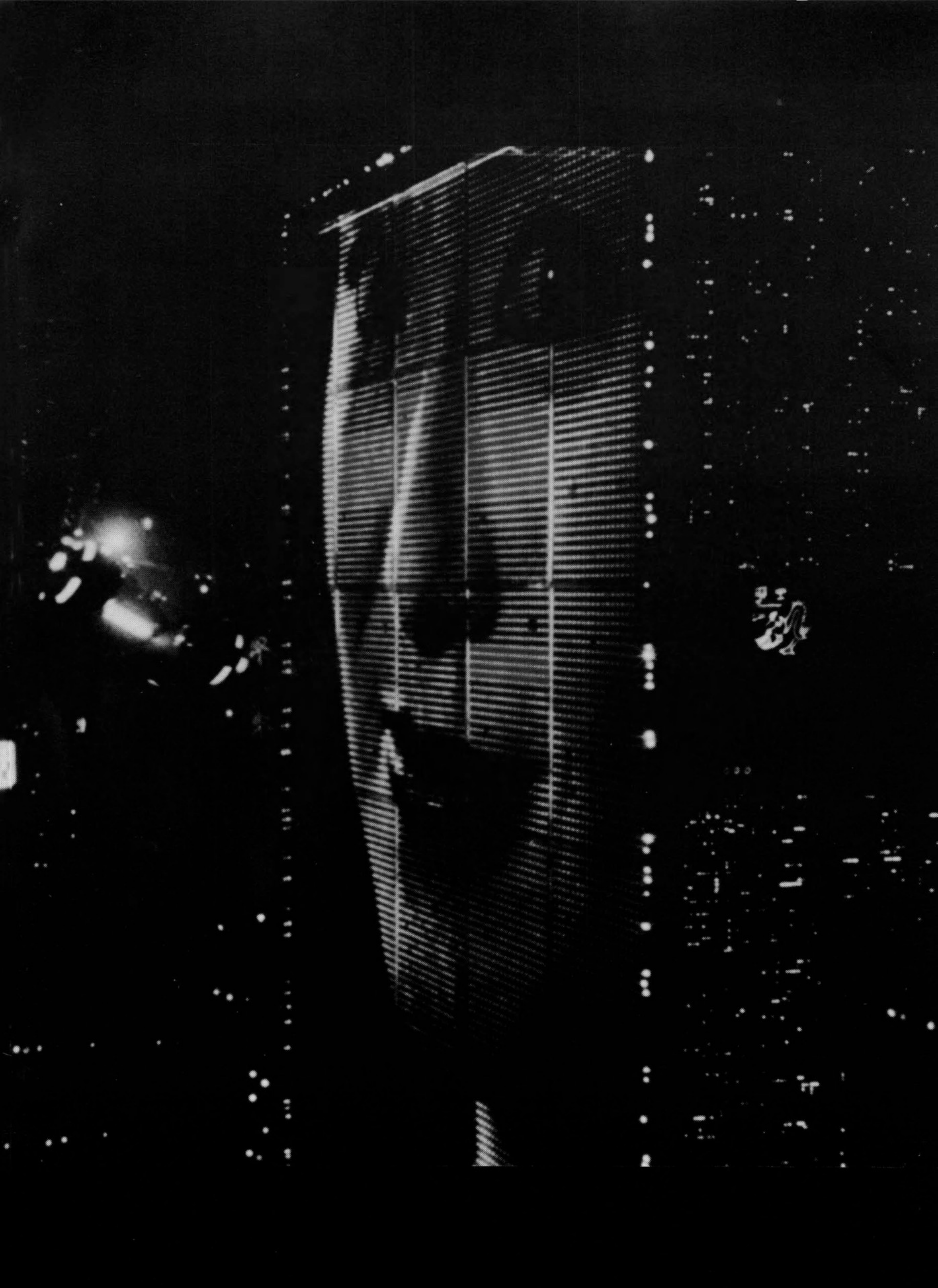
Other scripts besides Fancher's first draft (a total of eight rewrites were ultimately done on the film) also retained Deckard's narration. For example, on page 5 of the **BLADE RUNNER** draft marked July 24, 1980, the reader is introduced to Deckard through the following words:

DECKARD (V.O.):

It was 97 degrees in the city and no hope of improvement. Not bad if you're a lizard. But two hours earlier I was drinking Aquavit with an Eskimo lady in North East Alaska. That's a tough change to make. It was so good, I didn't want to leave, so I left a day early.

Deckard's narration was also evident as late as **BLADE RUNNER**'s February/May 1981 draft (on





page 10), a screenplay coauthored by David (UNFORGIVEN) Peoples, and finished only three weeks prior to the March 9, 1981 start of principal photography:

DECKARD (V.O.):

For all practical purposes, they [replicants] were people. Except they had inhibited life spans. They were genetically designed to last only about four years. And they were illegal on earth except by special permit.

Clearly then, any assertion that Deckard's narration was a last-minute decision—as well as the rumor that Harrison Ford was so peeved at having to deliver this eleventh hour voiceover that the actor purposefully read his lines in a flat, colorless monotone—must be viewed with a skeptical eye.

FACE #2 THE THEATRICAL (DOMESTIC) CUT

Embassy Home Entertainment #13805, LD/OP, 114m

When **BLADE RUNNER** received its official theatrical release, gone were Batty's VidPhōn conversation and the reloading of Deckard's gun. Otherwise, the print was essentially the same one I'd seen in San Diego.

This R-Rated version has never been available on tape, but it was shown on pay and cable television outlets and issued on laserdisc by Embassy in a pan&scan transfer (though the sleeve implied that the disc contained the so-called "International Cut").

Leading us to the **BLADE RUNNER** variant most responsible for the film's growing reputation...

FACE #3 THE INTERNATIONAL CUT

Embassy Home Entertainment (#1380, OP)
Nelson Entertainment (\$19.95), 116m 59s

The version of **BLADE RUNNER** which most people have seen—indeed, the version upon which its current reputation primarily rests—is, as previously stated, not the original Theatrical Cut.

BLADE RUNNER was originally released on videotape by Embassy Home Entertainment, a division of the defunct Avco-Entertainment group, in 1983. The Embassy tape (as well as the subsequent video release by Nelson Entertainment, a company which acquired **BLADE RUNNER** from Embassy and, in 1992, issued a special "Tenth Anniversary Edition" video of the film... which was exactly like any other

tape version of the movie!), did not use the domestic version of **BLADE RUNNER** for their source print.

Instead, a somewhat longer, slightly more violent "International Cut" was utilized, one that played only outside the United States. Rather than leave video consumers unaware of this fact, Embassy added this explanation to their **BLADE RUNNER** video box covers: "WARNING: This film contains never before released sequences of graphic violence which were edited out of the theatrical release in an attempt to soften the very adult tone of the picture. See more of the future in the year 2019... if you dare!" This caveat (which was repeated on the Nelson Entertainment cassettes) was followed by a listed running time of 119m, suggesting that *five extra minutes* of footage had been grafted onto the film.

Well—yes and no. A quick check of the running time of the International Cut shows that this **BLADE RUNNER** clocks in at just under 117m, which is barely 3m longer than the original release.

On the matter of added violence, however, the video box hyperbole made good. The Embassy/Nelson **BLADE RUNNER** does offer scenes of physical and spiritual cruelty which Scott himself had edited out for the United States release.

In the spirit of expediency, I have decided to cite the differences between the Domestic/International Cuts—not by utilizing the videotape but, instead, by comparing the Warner Home Video **DIRECTOR'S CUT** laserdisc (which features the *domestic* version of the film) with the Voyager Company's special "Criterion Collection" disc (which features the International Cut). I have chosen this technique simply because Warner and Voyager's use of chapter stops makes accessing the violent moments found only in the International Cut that much easier to access.

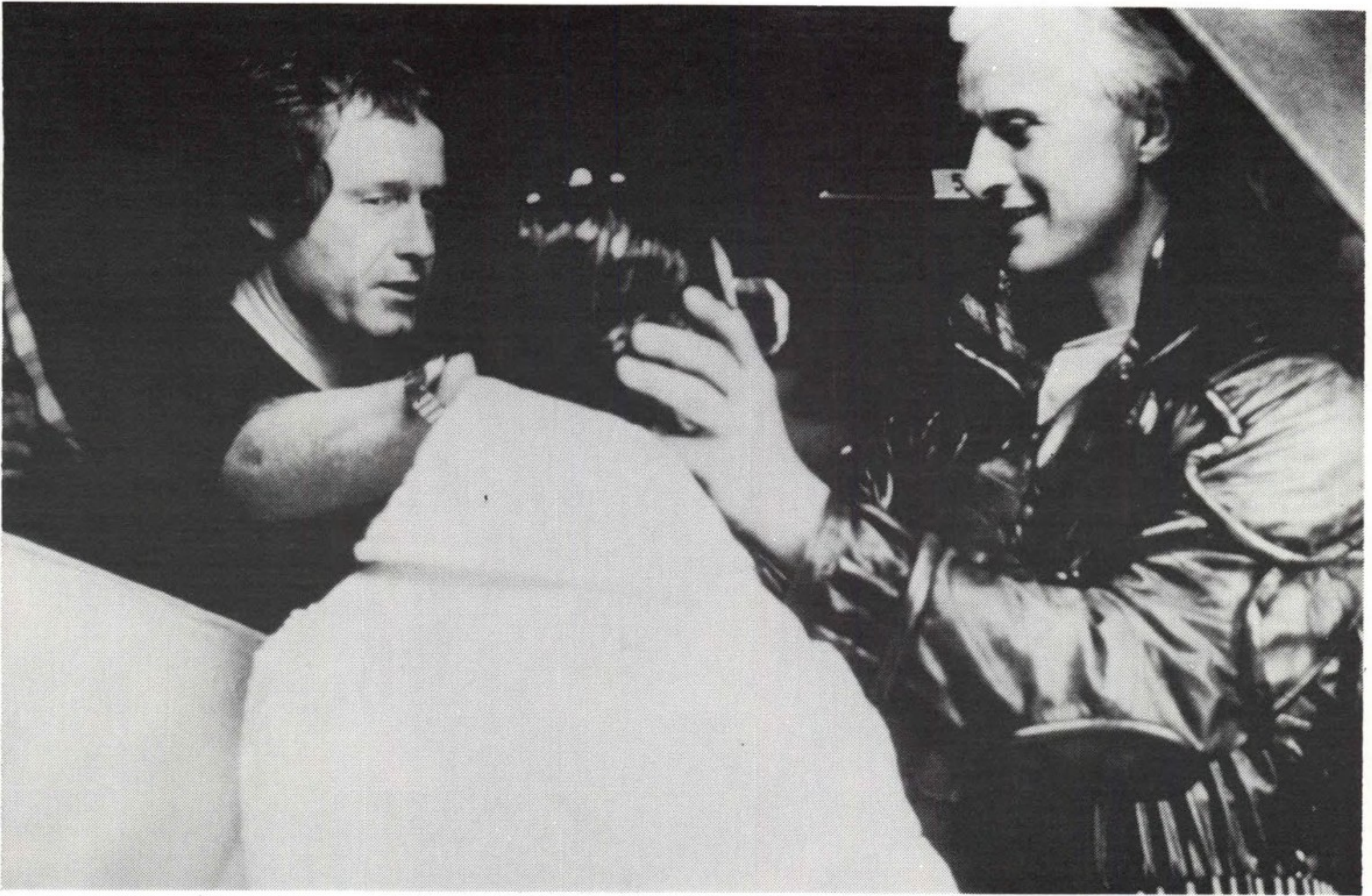
In any event, there are three sequences in the International Cut which contain material not found in the Domestic Cut. They are:

Tyrell's Death:

In all versions of **BLADE RUNNER**, Roy Batty kisses his "maker" Eldon Tyrell (Joe Turkel) before taking the man's head between his hands and literally squeezing the life out of him.

However, in both the Domestic/Director's Cuts this sequence is markedly less visceral than the one found in the International Cut. The domestic version of Tyrell's death (Warner Side 3, Chapter Nine, frames 40555 to 41205) is edited like this:

Batty kisses Tyrell. Begins squeezing Tyrell's head. *Cut* to a closeup of Batty's thumbs just beginning to press into Tyrell's eye sockets. *Cut* to a long closeup shot of Batty's straining face,



Director Ridley Scott rehearses Tyrell's death scene with Rutger Hauer and a prop dummy.

over which can be heard the sound of Tyrell's cracking skull. *Cut* to Sebastian's expression of revulsion. *Cut* to a medium shot of Batty holding Tyrell's bloodied head and letting it drop out of frame.

Now, compare this sequence to the events found in the International Cut (Voyager Side 3, Chapter 17, frames 37645 to 38284):

Batty kisses Tyrell. Begins squeezing Tyrell's head. *Cut* to Batty's thumbs pushing into Tyrell's eyes. *Cut* to Batty's straining face. *Cut* to Batty's thumbs gouging deep into Tyrell's eyes, *with blood squirting from both sockets*. *Cut* to Batty, straining. *Cut* to a horrified reaction shot of Sebastian. *Cut* back to Batty's face. *Cut* to a closeup of Batty's thumb pulling out of Tyrell's gory sockets. *Cut* to a two-shot of Batty releasing Tyrell's head, which drops out of frame.

A quick comparison of the differing frame counts between these two versions reveals that the International Cut is actually 11 frames *shorter* than the Domestic/Director's Cuts, whose longer running time is taken up by the long take held on Batty's face.

Pris Attacks Deckard:

Further differences appear between the two variants in the scene where Deckard battles and ultimately kills Pris. For instance, the Domestic Cut (Warner Side 4, Chapter 2, frames 7931-9177), which begins with Pris kicking Deckard across the room is edited thusly:

Deckard's head is pinned between Pris' thighs, who is astride him riding Deckard's shoulders. Pris forces Deckard's head around 180 degrees, giving the unnerving impression that she has broken his neck. Pris then slaps Deckard three times across the sides of his head with her open palms. *Cut* to a closeup of Pris' watching face. *Cut* to Deckard's head falling backwards, to bounce off the floor.

At this point, the Domestic/Director's Cuts includes a clearly heard audio effect of *Deckard's nose breaking*, just before his head hits the floor—*yet we have not seen Pris touch Deckard's nose!*

Compare this moment to the Voyager **BLADE RUNNER** (Side 4, Chapter 18, frames 5723-7226. *Note:* The Voyager dust jacket incorrectly lists this chapter as occurring at the end of Side 3):



Pris flirts with genetic designer J.F. Sebastian (William Sanderson) amid his toy menagerie.

Deckard is kicked by Pris. Has his head turned around. But now there are only *two* slaps to the side of his head. *Cut to* Pris looking down. *Cut to* a side shot of Deckard's head between Pris' legs, as *she inserts two fingers into his nose and begins pulling it backwards*. *Cut to* another shot of Pris' watching face. *Cut to* a different angle of Deckard's head between Pris' legs, with her fingers pulling his nose even farther back. *Cut to* a closeup of Pris' face straining with effort. *Cut to* the same last shot seen in the Warner disc—Deckard's head falling back onto the ground—and the same “nose-crunching” sound effect.

This time, however, the inclusion of this effect punctuates the fact that Pris has broken Deckard's nose. Another segment of Pris' death scene also plays differently between the International/Domestic Cuts. In the Domestic/Director' Cuts:

Pris begins to cartwheel towards Deckard; he shoots her, once. She crashes against the wall and falls to the floor. *Cut to* Deckard rolling over. *Cut to* Pris thrashing on the floor.

Cut to Deckard getting to his feet. *Cut to* Pris, still thrashing. *Cut to* Deckard, looking at her. *Cut to* Pris, still thrashing. *Cut to* Deckard, aiming his gun and firing for the second time. *Cut to* Pris' body, spasming upwards in a slow-motion death throe.

The female replicant's death in the Voyager/International versions, though, is more graphic.

Pris cartwheels towards Deckard. He shoots her, once. Pris hits the wall and floor. *Cut to* Deckard, looking. *Cut to* Pris, thrashing. *Cut to* Deckard, getting up. *Cut to* the thrashing Pris. *Cut to* Deckard, looking. *Cut to* Pris' third thrashing.

So far, the International Cut's continuity is the same as that of the Domestic Cut. However, at this point in the International version:

Deckard raises his gun and fires it for a second time. Cut to a fourth shot of Pris thrashing and screaming. Cut to Deckard firing his gun a *third* time. *Cut to* Pris' body rising up off the floor in slow motion.



Deckard is chased along the façade of the Bradbury Apartment Building by Batty.

All told, then, the International Cut includes three extra shots in this sequence; Deckard raising his gun, Pris thrashing a fourth time, Deckard firing a third round into the female replicant.

Nail Punctures Batty's Hand:

Two additional closeups were used in the International Cut, which show the nail Batty pushes through his palm popping out the back of his hand. These shots occur in Voyager's **BLADE RUNNER** on Side 4, Chapter 19, at frames 16530 to 16555 and 16611 to 16646.

FACE #4 THE CRITERION (Special Edition) CUT

Voyager CC1120L, \$89.95 CAV

Voyager CC1169L, \$49.95 CLV

116m, Includes Supplements

As previously noted, Voyager's 1987 "Criterion Collection" laserdisc of **BLADE RUNNER** takes the expanded International Cut as its source print. This, in and of itself, would not seem to warrant its singling out as a fourth, distinctly separate version of the film; indeed, Voyager's use of the International Cut would

seem to pigeonhole this disc as only a much higher-priced reprise of **BLADE RUNNER**'s third face.

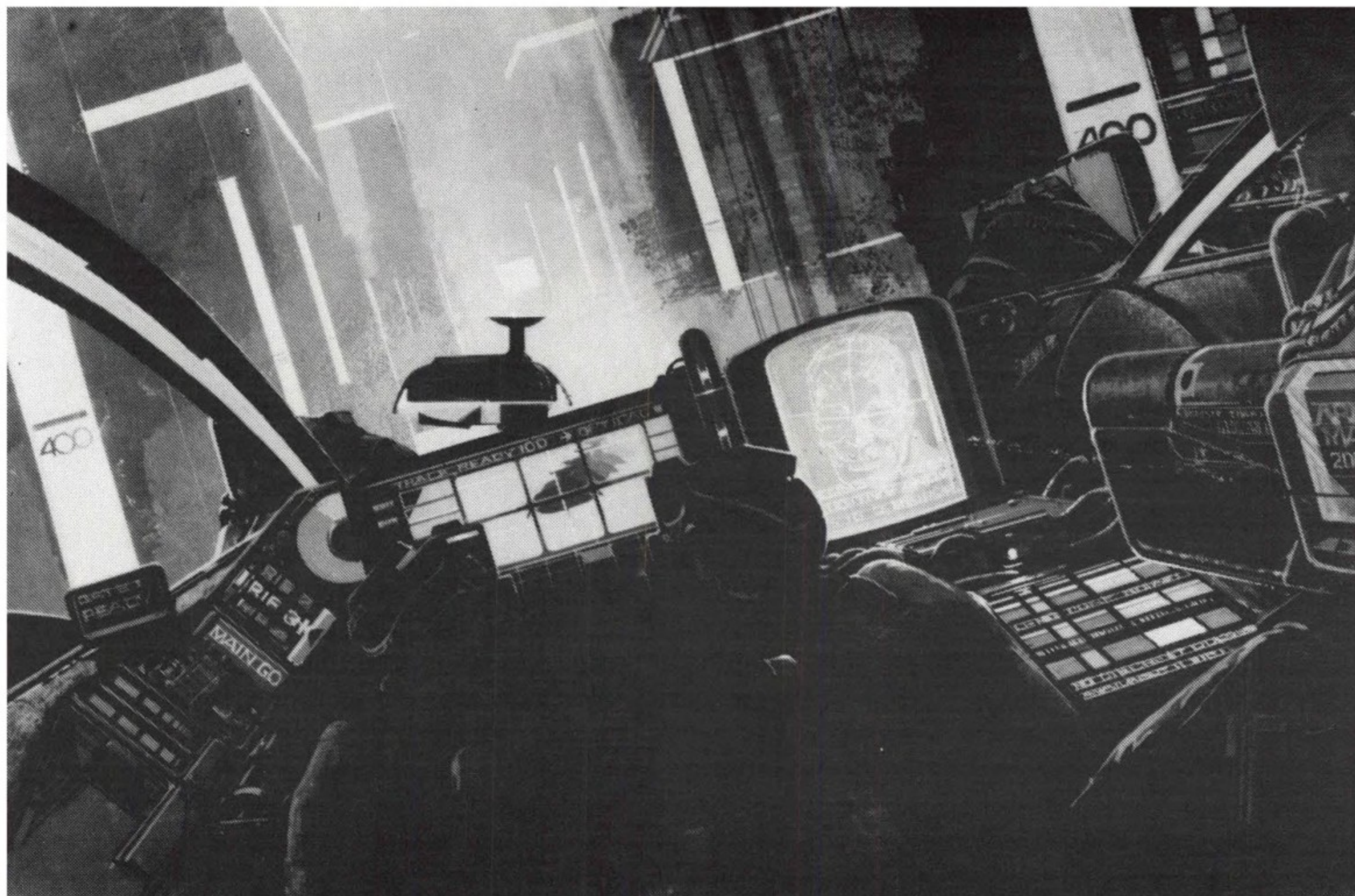
However, Voyager's generous (2.50:1) letterboxing—as well as the significant addition of extensive behind-the-scenes materials to their two-disc CAV edition—immediately set this "special edition" apart from all other versions of **BLADE RUNNER**—particularly since these features are not available on any other disc or tape format. (Of course, all other versions of the International Cut are in the pan&scan format.)

Therefore, the Criterion disc may, *de facto*, be viewed as a fourth version of the film.

In any event, "The **BLADE RUNNER** Supplement" begins on Side 4, Chapter 21. Produced by Isaac Mizrahi, the supplementary material breaks down into these respective components:

4:21 The Syd Mead Gallery

This still-frame portfolio begins with the words, "A collection of original gouache illustrations, preliminary sketches, and pen and marker renderings produced by Syd Mead, as the 'visual futurist' for **BLADE RUNNER**. What follows are text explanations and visual examples of how noted industrial designer Mead (who also worked on such films as



Syd Mead's pre-production art of a Spinner cockpit interior.

TRON and **STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE**) produced his own unique contributions to **BLADE RUNNER**'s cityscapes, interior sets and vehicles, particularly the airborne police 'Spinner.'

4:22 A Fan's Notes

Prepared by William M. Kolb—who, at the time of this disc's pressing, was a communications system design consultant with ARINC Research Corporation—this section of Voyager's **BLADE RUNNER** contains a useful, detailed overview on many different aspects of the film.

Sample excerpt: "Animated Coca-Cola advertisement on side of building changes to Wakamoto, a traditional Japanese digestive aid which is probably older than Coke."

4:23 The BLADE RUNNER Trivia Test

Self-explanatory. Written by Kolb, this chapter begins with the question "What is Leon's last name?" Answers to Kolb's quiz, however, are not included.

4:24 Annotated Bibliography

Another self-explanatory chapter. This one includes an exhaustive list of all books, magazines, and newspaper articles devoted to **BLADE RUNNER** (through the year 1987).

4:25 Syd Mead Reprise

Yet another collection of Mead's preproduction art, most of which was previously seen in Chapter 21. However, in this chapter, instead of pushing the usual still/step button to move through the illustrations on a frame-by-frame basis, the viewer can push "Play" and watch the artwork advance in a carousel-type slideshow.

FACE #5 THE WORKPRINT CUT

112m

Despite the enthusiasm with which **BLADE RUNNER**'s Director's Cut was recently received, the most radically different version of this important film has yet to be released on either tape or disc!

On Friday, September 27, 1991, Santa Monica's NuArt Theater and San Francisco's Castro Theatre began a two week limited run of what was *then* called "The **BLADE RUNNER** Director's Cut." Audience response to this version was unprecedented; the NuArt's first week run set a house record while the second week bested that. In fact, after extensive local media coverage and enthusiastic word of mouth, the NuArt engagement was ultimately extended to four

weeks (exactly 27 days), during which time the film grossed \$230,059 in Los Angeles alone.

The origins of this so-called "Director's Cut"—not to be confused with the version now available on Warner Home Video—are confused and hazy. A great deal of contradictory information has been generated on the nature, exhibition and discovery of this print, as well.

Actually, a 70mm **BLADE RUNNER** "Director's Cut" had been screened at a number of Los Angeles venues *prior* to the NuArt/Castro engagements. To further complicate matters, the print which premiered at the NuArt/Castro was *not* this 70mm version; it was actually a completely *different* version, a *workprint*—and a radically different one at that (for more details on the so-called "70mm Director's Cut," please refer to Face #6).

The **BLADE RUNNER** Workprint had been discovered by film preservationists Ron Haver and Robert A. Harris in 1991. This version had previously been screened only in Great Britain, in 1982, at a sneak preview for English audiences. Of all the versions of **BLADE RUNNER**, it is the shortest—only 112m long.

Still, the **BLADE RUNNER** Workprint is by far the most "different" of the seven variants of this

film. By using the chapter stops and disc numbers of the Warner Home Video Director's Cut laserdisc for comparison, we find many visual and aural departures from all other versions of **BLADE RUNNER**—differences which began with the credits of the Workprint itself.

1:1 Credits and Foreword

Unlike the numerous credits which introduce all other versions, the **BLADE RUNNER** Workprint simply started with the words "Harrison Ford" (colored red) sliding sideways onto the screen, accompanied by the sound of two knives being scraped together. This credit was then quickly pushed aside by the words "Blade Runner" (also in red, also to the sound of clashing steel). Film proper then began.

The Workprint also dispensed with the explanatory text that defines the terms "replicant," "blade runner" and "retirement" in all other versions of the film. Instead, the Workprint opened with a concise excerpt from a 21st century dictionary defining a "Replicant" as being the end result of a series of artificially created humans, a progression listed in the Workprint dictionary as "Robot, android, nexus."

Mead's futuristic designs brought to life by production designer Lawrence G. Paul.





Deckard grabs a quick meal at the sushi bar.

1:2 Eye on the City

During the introductory flight over the hellish, flame-belching “Hades” landscape, the Workprint omitted full-screen closeups of a gigantic blue eye (a literal “iris in”) which appear in all other versions of the film.

1:3 Leon’s Emotional Response

After Leon shoots Holden, all previous versions showed the wounded policeman crashing through an office wall from the impact of Leon’s weapon. But the Workprint then included a shot of Holden slumped over a computer, face resting on the keyboard. A smoking hole was clearly shown in Holden’s back, over which turned a slowly-rotating ceiling fan.

1:4 Street Scene; Interrupted Sushi

The Workprint omitted Deckard’s first voiceover as he waits for a space at an open-air sushi bar. And like Warner’s Director’s Cut, the **BLADE RUNNER** Workprint then completely dropped all the rest of Ford’s narration for the remainder of the film—with one key exception, which occurred much later.

The Workprint here also included a heretofore unseen closeup of Deckard’s noodle bar dinner; what viewers saw was a closeup of two jellied shrimp.

Moments later, after Deckard has been commandeered by Gaff (Edward James Olmos) and taken for a ride in the airborne spinner, the Workprint extended the duration of this flight over L.A. by about 10s, making the entire flyover seem longer and moodier.

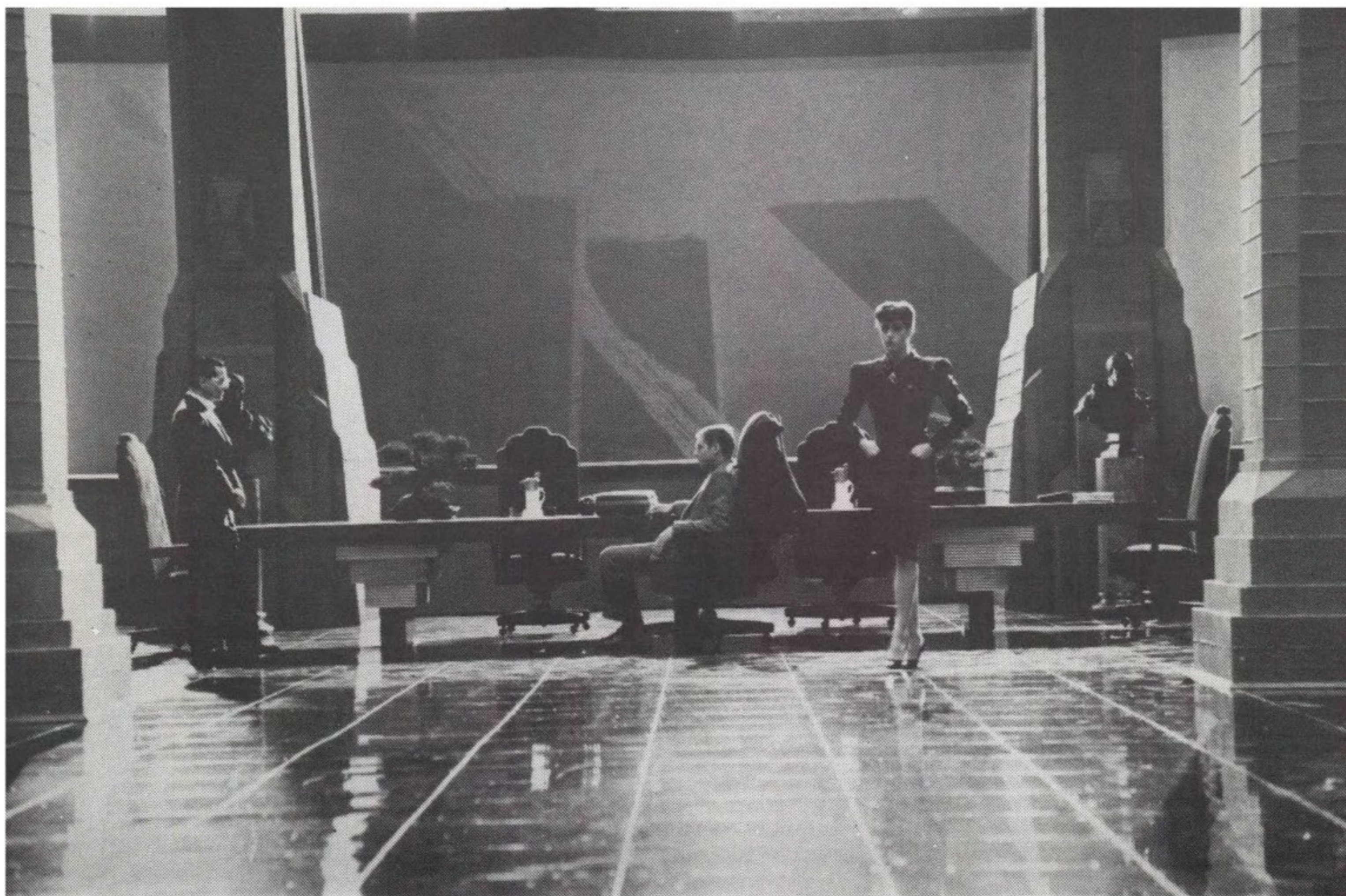
1:5 The Old Blade Runner Magic

Although no significant visual additions or deletions were inserted here in the Workprint, the lack of Deckard’s narrative description of his former boss Bryant as a bigot had two unexpected benefits:

First, the entire scene seems more compact, plays more quickly. Secondly, after Bryant threatens Deckard for refusing the job of pursuing the rogue Nexus 6 replicants (“You know the score, pal—if you’re not a cop, you’re little people”), the closeup of Gaff’s first origami sculpture more clearly conveys the shot’s ironic visual counterpoint: Gaff’s origami is a *chicken*. A moment later, when Deckard capitulates to Bryant’s demand, we realize this sculpture is a wry visual allusion to the fact that Ford’s character has, in effect, turned “chicken.”

1:6 The Replicants in Question

During Bryant’s video briefing about Deckard’s replicant quarry, the Workprint added an expository



Deckard discusses the results of Rachael's Voight-Kampff test with Eldon Tyrell (Joe Turkel) at the wealthy recluse's pyramidal penthouse.

line of dialog concerning Leon, with Bryant stating that Leon can "lift 4000 pound loads all day long."

During Gaff and Deckard's later flight towards the Tyrell Pyramid, the Workprint also inserted three brief shots of other spinners passing behind, to the side and in front of the duo's own airborne vehicle.

1:7 Rachael; The Voight-Kampff Test

The Workprint included an extra audio track during Gaff and Deckard's descent towards the Tyrell Pyramid. What was heard was a "Tower Control Voice" (with a Chuck Yeager/NASA Mission Control-type accent) guiding the spinner toward its landing.

Other Workprint changes in this section included a different Vangelis musical cue for the moment when Tyrell's office window darkens to filter out the sunlight. Also, Ford's dialog was more audible during his Voight-Kampff interrogation of Rachael, perhaps reflecting the Workprint's as yet unsweetened sound mix.

1:8 Leon's Apartment

When Gaff and Deckard are being shown into Leon's hotel room by a man who opens Leon's

door, the Workprint gave this heretofore mute character a single word of dialog: "Kowalski." Furthermore, this line called attention to the fact that the hotel attendant is wearing a strange breathing apparatus, an appliance consisting of a plastic facemask and tubes. (While on location, I was told that this character was the hotel's night manager, and that the apparatus was a futuristic solution to the man's breathing problems.)

The rain effects in this section of the Workprint also seemed more noticeable. In fact, throughout the **BLADE RUNNER** Workprint there was a much more visceral "feel" for the wet, soggy climate which pervades the film (a result of the rain not yet being optically treated in post-production?).

1:9 Chew's Visitors

2:1 "If Only You Could See..."

No changes.

2:2 A Visitor with Someone Else's Memories

In the Workprint, after Deckard reveals that Rachael's memories are artificial implants, the scene of her psychological devastation lasts longer, primarily through the addition of a few extra seconds



Sebastian suffers quietly in Pris' potentially deadly embrace.

of Rachael crying. The end result is that we more deeply feel Rachael's humiliation and Deckard's embarrassment.

With the loss of Deckard's narration as the shadows in a falsified snapshot of Rachael and her "mother" mysteriously move, the Workprint also called attention to a subtle sound effect—the faint laughter of distant children. This effect, which is present in all other versions of the film, here gained added notice by the fact that it was not stepped on by Ford's voiceover ("Replicants weren't supposed to have feelings").

2:3 Pris Meets Sebastian

When Pris accidentally loses her footing and breaks the window in the side of Sebastian's van, the Workprint substituted a louder, different "shattering glass" sound effect.

2:4 Deckard's Dream

As Deckard plays a desultory tune on the piano in his apartment, the Workprint substituted different Vangelis music throughout this scene. Also, no moody saxophone was heard playing on the soundtrack.

It is at this point that the Director's Cut shows Deckard musing on a unicorn galloping through a

forest. However, no such shot appeared in the Workprint.

2:5 Computer Photo Scan

In the Workprint, when Deckard scanned Leon's photograph with his Esper computer and discovered Roy Batty sitting at a table, he said, "Hi, Roy." This dialog can be found in no other version of the film.

Later, when the Esper revealed a turbaned Zhora reclining on a couch, the Workprint had Deckard asking, "Zhora or Pris?" This line also did not appear in any prior prints.

2:6 Manufactured Skin

I cannot verify this impression without a handy copy of the Workprint (which, alas, remains unavailable), but I *recall* that the voice of the elderly Chinese woman who scans Deckard's snake scale under an electron microscope was not the same voice as used in all other prints.

What I *am* sure of, is that the dialog between Deckard and the replicant snake dealer was different in the Workprint. However—and even though I saw this Workprint three times—I neglected to write down the exact lines in this scene.

You'll have to take my word for it.

2:7 Miss Salome's Dressing Room

Just before Deckard enters the nightclub where Zhora works as an exotic dancer, the Workprint included a shot of two-near nude women wearing hockey masks and gyrating in a clear plastic capsule attached above the club's entrance. Obviously a form of living advertisement, this "barker shot" was just as obviously dropped for technical reasons; clumsily framed and harshly overlit, it appeared to have been hurriedly filmed, and would have been jarringly out of place with Jordan Cronenweth's otherwise impeccable cinematography.

The scene where Zhora strangles Deckard with his necktie also ran a bit longer in the Workprint; more urgent gurgling noises issuing from Deckard's throat were dubbed onto the soundtrack as well.

2:8 Pursuing Zhora

3:1 Retirement...Witnessed

No changes.

3:2 How Many to Go?

The audio mix on the Workprint boosted the amplification of the Mills Brothers' "If I Didn't Care" (a tune prominently featured in the film's original theatrical trailer) during the scene where Bryant informs Deckard that he must now also retire run-away replicant Rachael. Since this old standard was

more noticeable on the Workprint, one must assume that this was yet another instance of an early, unsatisfactory sound mix.

3:3 "Wake up. Time to Die."

Leon's death scene was somewhat truncated here. The Workprint did not include the shot of Leon's lifeless body falling forward to cover Deckard, nor was the shot of Rachael stepping forward holding Deckard's gun (*à la* all previous prints) included.

3:4 "I Am the Business;" "I Owe You One."

The Workprint scene in Deckard's apartment after Rachael has saved Deckard's life gained added gravity by the fact that Vangelis' music score did not intrude until much later in this sequence.

Parenthetically, the one surviving shot in all prints which suggests that Deckard might be a replicant (an out-of-focus Harrison Ford hovering over Rachael's shoulder and saying "But somebody would," as his eyes exhibit the replicant's telltale golden glow) also appeared in the Workprint.

3:5 The Real Thing?

The shot of Rachael letting down her hair while sitting at Deckard's piano was a bit shorter here. Vangelis' Workprint score was at this point also

"Snakes? I hate snakes!" Deckard shows more intestinal fortitude than Indiana Jones when he learns that he's trailing a snake dancer.





Deckard bullies an emotional response from Rachael.

noticeably different from the music used in the final cut, particularly during the moment when Deckard orders Rachael to say “Kiss me.”

3:6 “There’s Only Two of Us Now”

An extra shot (specifically, a wide/master shot) showing the interior of Sebastian’s flat in the Bradbury Apartments, with a particular emphasis on the many dolls and automatons that share his living space, was included in the Workprint.

3:7 “We Need You, Sebastian”

3:8 The Right Moves

No Changes.

3:9 The Prodigal Son Brings Death

Tyrell’s death scene underwent significant changes in the Workprint. To begin, Batty’s vehement demand to his maker—“I want more life, fucker”—was altered to “I want more life, *father*”, giving the line an added emotional complexity.

Tyrell’s headcrushing also reverted to the less graphic editing of the original Theatrical Cut, with Batty’s thumbs gouging into Tyrell’s eyes only once. No bloody sockets were seen. Further, an extra shot of Tyrell’s replicant owl was inserted in the Workprint following the closeup of Batty’s straining face (this

“owl shot” occurs in the Director’s Cut, as well.)

Finally, when Batty begins to move towards the terrified Sebastian after the replicant has murdered Tyrell, the Workprint inserted a few extra lines of dialog. “Sorry, Sebastian,” Batty soothingly said. “Come, come.” The Workprint version of Tyrell’s death then ended with an audibly whimpering Sebastian turning to run from Tyrell’s apartment.

The Workprint also reshuffled a subsequent dialog track. In all other versions of the film, a number of different dispatcher voices are heard emanating from Deckard’s police scanner as he drives through a street-tunnel underpass after Tyrell’s death. However, in the Workprint, Deckard hears a radio dispatch from *Bryant* while driving through the tunnel, telling the Blade Runner to investigate one J.F. Sebastian, age 25, at the Bradbury Apartments. This same radio dispatch can be heard in all other versions of **BLADE RUNNER**, but it occurs a few moments later in the film, as Deckard sits in his parked car before being hailed by a curious police spinner.

4:1 “No Way to Treat a Friend”

As previously noted, the Workprint did not contain Bryant’s radio message while Deckard sits in his parked car. Random dispatches occurred on the audio track instead.



"There's only two of us now..."

4:2 Death Among the Menagerie

At the point where Deckard enters the Bradbury Apartments, Vangelis' score was dropped altogether from this version of the film. Instead, various temp tracks were added (although the Workprint did include Vangelis' pounding "Blade Runner" theme over the end credits). This temporary musical score was, incidentally, quite annoying—composed of generic suspense music, loud and grating, with blaring horns and swirling violins.

Pris' death scene in the Workprint also demonstrated some curious inconsistencies. While the shots of her breaking Deckard's nose *à la* the International Cut were included in the Workprint—with the sound of Deckard's crunching nose brought up *loud* on the Workprint soundtrack—Deckard himself only fired two shots to kill Pris, not the three seen in the International Cut. Yet Pris' screams as she thrashes around on Sebastian's floor were much louder in the Workprint, giving her death throes an unnerving intensity absent from any other version of the film.

4:3 "Proud of Yourself, Little Man?"

An extra closeup of Batty breaking Deckard's finger, accompanied by a much louder *snap!*, was inserted in the Workprint.

4:4 Wounded Animals

Just before Batty begins to pursue Deckard through the abandoned upper floors of the Bradbury building, the Workprint had Roy yelling out, "I'm coming to get you!" Hauer affected a deep, melodramatic "horror show host" voice for this line reading, giving it an unintentionally comic spin.

During the ensuing chase and battle on the rooftop, the Workprint then dropped its previous temp music for tracks lifted from Jerry Goldsmith's score for **ALIEN**.

Additionally, the Workprint did not include the closeups of the nail pushing out through the back of Batty's hand (a deletion which occurs in the Director's Cut as well). Instead, the Workprint held on Batty's tortured face.

4:5 The Building Ledge

No changes, except the continuing (irritating) presence of the **ALIEN** temp track.

4:6 The Roof

More of the **ALIEN** temp track, but no other changes.

4:7 To Live in Fear

Still more **ALIEN**; otherwise, no changes.



4:8 Like Tears in Rain; "But Then Again, Who Does?"

Mercifully, the **ALIEN** score ended with Batty and Deckard sitting opposite one another on the rain-drenched rooftop. However, immediately after the dying replicant murmured "All those moments will be lost, in time... like tears in rain" (a line improvised by Hauer on-set) and "Time to die," the Workprint then added the *only* instance of voice-over narration heard in this version. This narration was spoken by Deckard. His exact words: "I watched him die all night. It was a long, slow thing, and he fought it all the way."

In all other versions of the film, an out-of-focus police spinner, facing head-on into the camera, can be seen rising in the background behind Batty's shoulder. However, the Workprint substituted a totally different shot—a wide master shot of a complete spinner *as seen from the rear*, rising up from the left of frame. Concurrently, one could also see the full-figure seated bodies of Batty and Deckard in this shot, occupying, respectively, screen center and screen right.

4:9 Souvenir of Dreams

The Workprint now picked up the **ALIEN** temp music again as Deckard searched for Rachael in his



apartment. This track ended as Deckard uncovered the sleeping form of Rachael on his bed.

Moreover, Deckard's worried queries of "Rachael? Rachael?" were omitted from the Workprint. Instead, the Workprint's last lines of dialog are Gaff's: "It's too bad she won't live. But then again who does?" which resonate as Deckard fingers the tinfoil origami unicorn Gaff has left behind.

Like the Director's Cut, the Workprint then concluded with Deckard and Rachael boarding the elevator and the doors slamming shut. However, the Workprint's sound mix of the closing doors was much louder than in any other version.

Finally, the Workprint omitted the upbeat "happy ending" of the San Diego/Domestic/International Cuts.

4:10 End Credits

The final credit in the Workprint included the text "This version copyright 1991 the Blade Runner partnership. All rights reserved." This text also (and only) appears at the end of the Director's Cut.

Although grainy, unmixed and unfinished, the **BLADE RUNNER** Workprint afforded film scholars a rare opportunity to assess the film's evolutionary progress; serious cinephiles were now given a unique opportunity to study what could be called, in literary terms, a rough draft of a modern classic.

Another appealing aspect of the Workprint was the manner in which it allowed one to reevaluate Harrison Ford's performance. This fine, subtle portrayal had been completely flattened in the other versions (except the Director's Cut) by **BLADE RUNNER**'s deadpan narration.

Finally—and perversely—the Workprint's extreme raggedness worked to its advantage. **BLADE RUNNER**'s theatrical release was slick and seamless, its various components smoothed out by tight editing, moody music, and perfectly color-balanced prints. Although the **BLADE RUNNER** Workprint bristles with such technical imperfections as inappropriate library music, contrasty lighting, and awkward edits, these blemishes did not throw the viewer out of the frame. On the contrary, they somehow made Scott's sullen, depressive mood piece *that much more quirkily alive*.

Opposite: Deckard climbs to the roof of the Bradbury Apartments.

Left: Behind the scenes: Filming Deckard dangling from the "rooftop."



Ridley Scott with producer Michael Deeley and matte artist Richard Yuricich.

FACE #6 THE FAIRFAX CUT

According to a quote attributed (in Lance Loud's **BLADE RUNNER** article for *DETAILS* magazine) to Barry Reardon, President of Warner Bros. Domestic distribution, "[In the fall of 1991] we were cleaning out our Warner Bros. archives and discovered Ridley's 70mm print of **BLADE RUNNER** and ascertained that it was his original cut. We played it one night at a theater in L.A. and it sold out; then it played at UCLA and a thousand kids showed up. I told Ridley I was trying out this version. He was surprised. He wanted to remix the sound and change and put in a few scenes—a unicorn dream sequence, a hospital scene. He did so (in the spring of '92). The old ending's out and **BLADE RUNNER** is sensational."

Interesting as Reardon's comments may be, they do not hold up to careful scrutiny. According to my own investigations (and an extensive article written by respected critic Kenneth Turan for the *LOS ANGELES TIMES MAGAZINE* [September 13, 1992]), the 70mm print was actually "discovered" in October of 1989 by one Michael Arick, then

Director of Asset Management, a responsibility which involved recovering and restoring the studio's films.

Then, in May 1990, during a 70mm film festival at the Cineplex Odeon Fairfax Theatre, a 10 AM screening of the newly discovered **BLADE RUNNER** print was held. I attended that screening, and it seemed to me that the print being shown was, in all probability, the rough cut used at the 1982 previews in Dallas and Denver.

This version was very similar to the one Warner would ultimately release as **BLADE RUNNER: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT**, although it still featured the temp music tracks subsequently heard in the Workprint. This "Fairfax Cut" was also shorn of the voiceover narration, deleted the extra 1.5m of violence seen in the International Cut, and ended with Scott's original "elevator climax." However, the Fairfax Cut did *not* include the controversial unicorn shot. Also missing were the two "iris in" shots of the huge staring eye seen at the film's beginning (an omission shared with the Workprint).

Special visual effects designer Douglas Trumbull poses behind the Tyrell Pyramid.



In any event, audience reaction to this screening was quite positive. Seemingly inspired by excellent word of mouth, UCLA's Los Angeles Perspectives multimedia festival, an event held at the Academy of Motion Pictures and Sciences in early 1991 (not at the UCLA campus, as Reardon contends), then booked the "Fairfax Cut." This second screening generated even more interest in a restored version of the film, leading writer Shawn Levy to report on the UCLA event in an article titled "Ridley Scissorhands," published in the August 1991 FILM COMMENT.

FACE #7 THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

Warner Home Video #12682, \$39.99, 115m 33s

Despite widespread enthusiasm, Ridley Scott was not happy with this newly revived print. In fact, in a recent telephone interview, Scott told me that "I came to Los Angeles to meet with Michael Arick and to see the 70mm print screened at the Fairfax. It had been some years, frankly, since I'd given thought to the film, and I wanted to refresh my memory. And after I saw it, I notified Arick and Warners that this was *not* the final cut of my film, pointing out the lack of my unicorn scene and the fact that the final flight between Deckard and Batty was using a temporary music track. Warner then agreed to pay for a sort of post-postproduction process, where I could go back to the editing room and put the picture into the shape I'd originally wanted it."

Scott's editing schedule probably explains why it was the *Workprint*, and not the Fairfax Cut, which was subsequently released to both the NuArt and Castro theaters, since the director was *still laboring* on his final cut at this time, using the 70mm Fairfax Cut as a working guide.

In any event, it was not until September 11, 1992 that **BLADE RUNNER: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT** finally reached audiences. On this date, a number of theaters around the United States showed 70mm prints of the film as a sort of promotional preview for its eventual tape/laserdisc release, which occurred in early Summer 1993.

It was at this time that viewers were introduced to the seventh and final face of **BLADE RUNNER**, one which, like the San Diego Preview Cut, closely resembles the original Theatrical Cut. For most audiences, the most significant change in the Director's Cut would have been the dropping of Deckard's voiceover, an omission which, up until now, had only been witnessed by those fortunate

enough to attend the film's NuArt, Castro, Fairfax or Academy screenings.

However, other changes were also visible in the Director's Cut. These can be found in the following chapter stops of Warner's **BR:TDC** laserdisc:

1:4 *Street Scene; Interrupted Sushi*

After the introduction of Deckard at the sushi stand, there is no narration. No other voiceovers occur throughout the remainder of the film.

2:4 *Deckard's Dream*

Herein occurs the fabled unicorn shot, as Deckard leans dreamily on his piano and mentally "sees" a snow-white unicorn galloping through a misty woods.

The unicorn shot has achieved its own peculiar mythology. Mentioned by Scott in numerous interviews after the film's release, the unicorn was supposed to signify Deckard's true status as a replicant. This vision implied that Deckard's reverie was actually an (impossible) artificial memory implanted by the Tyrell Corporation—one to which Gaff is also apparently privy, since he leaves behind an origami unicorn outside Deckard's apartment.

However, the unicorn scene was apparently *never filmed*; why else would Scott lift a shot from his own **LEGEND** (1985) for the inclusion of this beast in the Director's Cut? When pressed on the topic, Scott would not directly answer my query on this topic, simply replying that "I used what I had to work with."

Still, the unicorn shot seems a maddeningly vague way of suggesting Scott's android status. It demands that the audience pull together the most tenuous plot threads connecting Deckard's reverie, his barelyseen glowing eyes, and Gaff's origami unicorn.

"But I always thought it was apparent Deckard was a replicant," Scott told me. Perhaps the director's feelings on this topic were clouded by fact that varying drafts of the screenplay had already spelled this out.

For example, on the last page (133) of the February '81 script, there appears this final bit of voiceover narrative. It is uttered by Deckard as he flies away with Rachael in his Spinner, with Gaff in hot pursuit:

DECKARD (V.O.):

I knew it on the roof that night. We were brothers, Roy Batty and I! Combat models of the highest order. We had fought in wars not yet dreamed of... in vast nightmares still unnamed. We were the new people... Roy and me and Rachael! We were made for this world. It was ours!



*Deckard administers the Voight-Kampff Test—
but on which side of the machine is he really sitting?*

Leading **BLADE RUNNER** script readers, at least, to realize that Rick Deckard had been a replicant all along.

Whatever the history behind the unicorn shot as now seen, it is equally clear that its inclusion in the Director's Cut may have done more to *cloud* the Deckard-as-replicant issue than to confirm it.

3:9 The Prodigal Son Brings Death

The Director's Cut does not show Batty explicitly gouging out Tyrell's eyes, unlike the International Cut's shots of Batty's thumbs sinking into Tyrell's sockets.

4:2 Death Among the Menagerie

Pris' death scene is shortened; she is only shot twice.

4:4 Wounded Animals

The shots of the nail penetrating the back of Batty's hand, and then being shown embedded there, have been dropped.

4:9 Souvenir of Dreams

The film ends with the closing elevator doors; there is no coda of Deckard and Rachael driving in the country, no **SHINING** landscapes.

Thus, with the conclusion of the Director's Cut, all seven faces of **BLADE RUNNER** are finally revealed. But one question remains: What, finally, caused the pains associated with **BLADE RUNNER**'s birth?

"Basically, the problems came about through it being my first time in Hollywood," explains Ridley Scott. "Although I wasn't a first time filmmaker by any means, I was totally unprepared for the stringent hierarchy of the studio system, one I'd never come across in England. I had to explain every inch of what I wanted, on literally every shot. Plus, I'd always been used to operating my own camera back in England, or at least personally using it, in ways disallowed by Hollywood unions. And Hollywood took that particular tool away from me.

"Primarily, though, I had to go through this whole process of explanation, which became very irritating and also made us work much more slowly. That, quite simply, was a murderous situation. So in the final analysis, although making **BLADE RUNNER** was a wonderful experience, it was also a battle. A war, actually."

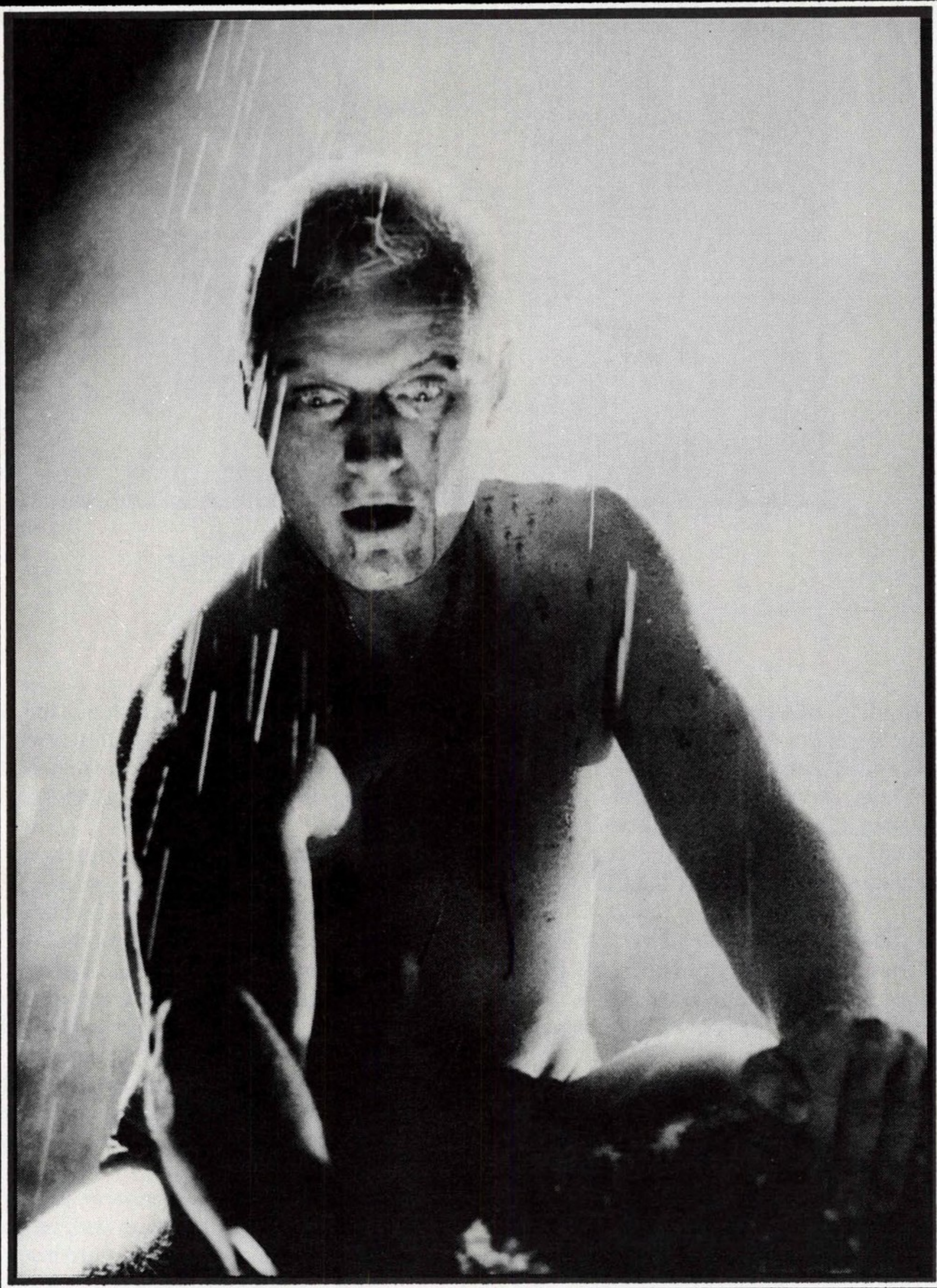
A conflict from which, thankfully, arose a masterpiece.

All seven versions of it.



By
Tim
Lucas

LASERDISCS



Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer) watches as his world disappears "like tears in rain" in BLADE RUNNER: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT.

BLADE RUNNER: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

1982/91, Warner #12682,
D/CC/S/SS/LB, 115m 33s, \$49.95

The phrase "director's cut" implies a version of a film that its director has declared as his own, as opposed to a compromised version more familiar to the movie-going public. This definition does not really apply to Ridley Scott's 1991 "director's cut" of his 1982 film **BLADE RUNNER**, which was made with the active and sympathetic collaboration of the current Warner Bros. regime, and might therefore be more accurately described as a "revised draft." Scott encountered considerable studio interference during the filming of this picture, and this is the movie he might have made if he'd had the contractual right to "final cut." Since Warner has pronounced the original version "out" in favor of this modern revision, perhaps *that's* what it should be called: **BLADE RUNNER: THE FINAL CUT**.

While reviewing this film in a previous issue [VW 18:14-15], I found it difficult to isolate my impressions of the new version from the ghosts of the original. It may take a couple of viewings for the new version to assert its independence, but the old flaws are undeniably gone, and the improvements are undeniable and substantial. **BLADE RUNNER**'s visual magnificence is now complemented with a complex, multi-tiered narrative that truly does reflect the full range of dramatic possibilities available to science fiction. It is not only Scott's masterpiece, it is a milestone of its genre.

Warner's disc features the same transfer as their **DIRECTOR'S CUT** cassette, but shorn of its Macrovision veneer, Jordan Cronenweth's Panavision images unfold under a glass that doesn't

resemble the steamed windows of a car at the drive-in. The 2.40:1 screen ratio is not as severe as the letterboxing of Voyager's "Criterion Collection" editions (about 2.50:1), revealing additional slivers of information at the top and bottom. The image texture remains a bit grainy. The CAV formatting is frame-perfect and this film is easily one of the most seductive and rewarding in terms of frame-by-frame analysis. For instance, the film titles on the Million Dollar Movie Theater marquee, opposite the Bradbury Apartments, actually change between the instances of Pris' and J.F. Sebastian's respective arrivals (which are mere seconds apart), that the bullet squibs are visible under Daryl Hannah's leopard as she cartwheels toward Deckard (Ford), and other incidental amusements besides.

The surround audio also experiences a significant improvement in the jump from tape to disc; with Ford's narration removed, we are not only forced to focus more on the film's dramatic performances, but our ears become more intent on its aural landscapes—the ambient sounds of rain, passing spinners, overhead advertising and, of course, Vangelis' exotic (still unreleased) score—in a way that increases the piece's prevalent sense of melancholy ten-fold. It's interesting to note that the original narration reduced the entire story to one of Deckard's memories, a result that worked against the film's basic intentions (not to mention Ford's onscreen performance). Of all musical formats, jazz ballads are the most evocative of memory—old loves, regrets, and roads not taken—and left on its own, Vangelis' score underlines many scenes with a powerful atmosphere of nostalgia, sadness, and introspection, while the more ethnic passages

enhance its sense of cultural confusion and placelessness. The music seems to express the yearning of souls unable to remember.

Curiously, the back of the single-sleeve disc jacket accompanies the film's MPAA R rating with the unusual explanation "Rated R for Violence" (in fact, it includes female nudity and strong language as well). An incorrect running time of 117m is also cited. The discs are thoroughly TOC-encoded with 36 chapters, which are not sequentially numbered, but begin again at Chapter 1 with each side change. Speaking of side breaks, the CAV formatting of the film has imposed some unusually disruptive side breaks on this presentation; the breaks on Voyager's 1987 CAV "Criterion Collection" disc were more considerate, and that was a longer version of the film! One side break on the Warner set requires an actual *disc change* just after Deckard fires his gun at Zhora (Joanna Cassidy); the first thing on Side 3 is her climactic crash through a series of arcade windows. For many viewers, this is the most suspenseful sequence in the film, and Warner's ill-timed interruptions may represent the best possible endorsement for their cassette release.

Those who also own Voyager's "international cut" disc may be amused to compare its jacket painting to the seemingly identical artwork that adorns the Warner sleeve. Harrison Ford's face has been extensively reworked to make it sweatier, fleshier, and more defined. In other words, while Scott's "Director's Cut" makes Deckard seem less human, the sleeve makes him look moreso; on the other hand, the face on Voyager's sleeve looks like it just rolled off the Tyrell assembly line. Shouldn't it be the other way around?

BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS

1970, FoxVideo #1101-85,
D/LB, \$49.95, 108m 40s

Twenty-three years after its original release, it's safe to say that most people who love Russ Meyer's (formerly X-rated) cult classic have only seen it via its Magnetic Video and FoxVideo [VW 19:11-12] incarnations. Neither of these distorted, pan&scan transfers can quite prepare the viewer for the seductive lustre of this letterboxed disc release, which restores the film's original Panavision framing. That's saying a lot when one considers that Meyer and cinematographer Fred J. Koenekamp were creating sprawling, overstuffed, Boschian panoramas within most of those frames. The recovery of the full image introduces a wealth of interesting background faces and peripheral activities that lend new color to familiar scenes, as well as a good deal of compositional storytelling. The film lives on disc as it never has on videotape.

So why has it taken so long? This hilarious, hallucinatory exposé of "the oft-times nightmare world of show business" was originally released by 20th Century Fox in the summer of 1970, only two short weeks after their release of another X-rated feature, Michael Sarne's **MYRA BRECKINRIDGE**. Meyer's modestly budgeted film was an unqualified box-office success, but the coincidence of two "Adults Only" releases in one two-week period inspired reviewers like Judith Crist to coin embarrassing phrases like "20th Stenchery Fox" and "20th Fontury Sex." The production also roused the ire of producer Paul Monash, who publicly lambasted Jack Valenti, the MPAA, and Fox studio chief Richard D. Zanuck for giving "their seal of

approval" to what he considered to be pornography. Another antagonist was Jacqueline Susann, author of the best-selling novel **VALLEY OF THE DOLLS**, whose original screen treatment for the sequel had been rejected. Susann brought a \$10,000,000 lawsuit against Fox prior to the film's opening, alleging that Meyer's hijinks would damage her reputation as a writer, which she lost. In 1975, despite disclaimers on the film itself and on all print advertising, Susann's widower sued Fox for failing to "adequately" dissociate **BVD** from his wife's creation, and was awarded \$2,000,000; Fox ultimately settled with Susann's estate for \$1,425,000. The film had cost less than \$1,000,000 to produce, but it ultimately cost the studio much more in headaches, court costs, and embarrassment.

After this protracted episode was finally put to rest, Fox effectively buried the film. **BVD** briefly sneaked out on Magnetic Video—along with **MYRA BRECKINRIDGE**, the unrated **CRUISING**, and other forbidden works—but disappeared from most store shelves when Fox dissolved the label to create CBS Fox Video. For more than a decade, Fox refused to reissue **BVD** on tape, citing its X-rating as an impossible commercial obstacle. Only two short years ago, they were rumored to be considering sub-licensing the film to an outside company, one not obliged to respect such constraints. But in today's age of fashionable erotic thrillers, which reap their highest profits on video in NC-17 or "unrated" form, such excuses are no longer valid... and so **BVD** has finally been liberated from the vaults. (We understand that 20th Century Fox is once again making widescreen 35mm prints available for theatrical rental, as well!)

The current regime at Fox apparently understand and appreciate the film, and they've done a super job with this much-anticipated disc. From the Fox fanfare logo to the triple wedding finale, the compositions, credits, and legend crawls are correctly framed at all times. Letterboxed at approximately 2.15:1, the screen ratio falls a mite short of 2.35:1 accuracy, but Fox is to be commended for not "zoomboxing" it (ie., slapping a correct ratio matte over an enlarged image), a tendency that we've been seeing all too often lately. The widening of the frame makes Meyer's cluttered, collage-style *mise en scène* much easier for the eye to swallow at a glance; as a result, the jackhammer editing feels more randy than frenzied. Koenekamp's cinematography features a number of splendidly graceful crane shots that were completely sabotaged by the earlier pan&scan transfers, which are used as lead-ins to country idylls between Pet (Marcia McBroom) and Emerson Thorne (Harrison Page), and Casey (Cynthia Myers, **PLAYBOY's** Miss December 1969) and Roxanne (Erica Gavin).

The revelation of the full frame also unmasks a surprising wealth of characterization. On the video-cassette editions, **BVD's** two musical montage sequences—"In the Long Run" (Chapter 9) and "Look Up at the Bottom" (Chapter 18)—look very confusing; here, we can see that the frame is being used as a kind of visual scale, charting the group's rise to fame in center while, on the screen's outer margins, counterpointing the respectively strengthening and waning influences of producer Ronnie "Z-Man" Barzell (John LaZar) and manager Harris Allsworth (David Gurian) with gloating/brooding close-ups of the two actors. The legendary massacre sequence is



*Dolly Read, Marcia McBroom, and Cynthia Myers
as the pneumatic psychedelists of BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS.*

more harrowing on disc than it appears in cropped form, where it loses much of its evil, suffocating atmosphere and has a tendency to appear merely campy. Even the uproariously unctuous Epilogue, criticized in our previous issue, benefits dramatically from being given a wider berth. LaZar steals the film, but we should also mention the beguiling lead performance of Dolly Read (PLAYBOY's Miss May 1966), who wears all of the faces required by her character (wide-eyed innocent, bright-eyed party ornament, bedroom-eyed seductress, and baggy-eyed, bottomed-out Hollywood veteran) with gusto. She can also lip-sync rock vocals with the best of them, and toss off creepyslang without making us dislike her. Under her real name of Margaret, Read broke into films as one of Dr. Ravna's handmaidens in Hammer's **KISS OF THE VAMPIRE** (1963).

The colors are stable and strong (with an emphasis on what used to be called "electric blue"), with nary a trace of noise in the red folds of Super Woman's cloak. That said, the red and green lighting during Z-Man's preparation of his party potion has little of the vibrant, neon quality that was discernable on the original Magnetic Video release. The film itself has been TOC-encoded with 24 chapter marks (25 counting the Fox logo), and the side break is well-placed. (We noticed some visible tension in the image for the last 10s or so of Side 1.) The mono soundtrack has also been appealingly presented, with screenwriter Roger Ebert's imaginative dialog crisply recorded for the most part (Erica Gavin's first lines are recorded a bit low) and the many songs feature a rich, detailed bass that makes the absence of stereo less regrettable.

BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA

1986, FoxVideo #1502-85,
D/S/SS/LB/CC, \$49.95, 100m 4s

John Carpenter has always been one of the modern cinema's great proponents of anamorphic photography, and it is gratifying that so much of his work—**THE THING** (1982), **STARMAN** (1984), **PRINCE OF DARKNESS** (1987), **THEY LIVE** (1988), and **MEMOIRS OF AN INVISIBLE MAN** (1992)—has become available on domestic and import disc in the letterboxed format. While most of these releases are worthy collectibles, Pioneer Special Edition's **STARMAN** is another example of the "zoom-boxing" phenomenon; in other words, the framing is measurably accurate, but it mattes an image that has been *blown-up* to provide the largest possible picture without destroying the original



*One of the Three Storms gets a swelled head (courtesy of Steve Johnson)
in John Carpenter's lively **BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA**.*

widescreen compositions or resorting to pan&scan. FoxVideo's new "Special Wide Screen Edition" of **BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA**, while lovely in the broad-strokes of its crisp, colorful look and imaginative stereo surround sound design, is unfortunately another of these cases.

One of Carpenter's most enjoyable films, **BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA** involves no-nonsense trucker Jack Burton (Kurt Russell) in a conflict of cosmic proportions. After winning a night-long poker game against young restaurateur Wang Chi (Dennis Dun), Jack must accompany Wang to the airport to meet his girlfriend Miao Lin (beautiful Suzee Pai) before collecting his winnings. To their amazement, she is abducted by the Lords of Death—a Chinese street gang—when their intended hostage is rescued by crusading lawyer Gracie Law (Kim Cattrall). That

night, Miao Lin is abducted once again by The Three Storms—a trio of metaphysical, lightning bolt-wielding warriors—who serve the evil Lo Pan (a brilliant, Draculean portrayal by James Hong), a "living ghost" determined to wed her, knowing that her rare green eyes will be appreciated by his demon, resulting in his own certain gift of immortality. Working from a W.D. Richter adaptation of a script by Gary Goldman and David Z. Weinstein, Carpenter succeeds in melding the best qualities of Howard Hawks and Tsui Hark into an entertaining, imaginative hybrid that is thematically consistent with his own best work.

This new letterboxed version is superior to the original CBS Fox pan&scan release (#150280) in a number of ways; the color is more vibrant, Dean Cundey's Panavision photography has been considerably reduced in grain,

and the stereo surround mix is less overwhelming, with more sophisticated separation and detail. The ambient sounds of rain and running truck motors are as pleasing as the multi-channel separation of Carpenter's electro-eclectic score. The least significant improvement, surprisingly enough, is the letterboxing of the image. The framing measures out to approximately 2.30:1, but judging from the onscreen compositions, this new transfer has apparently slapped a 2.30 matte over an image enlarged to something more like 1.75!

Here are some examples (all from Side 2) to illustrate this point: 1) While Jack and company make their way through the subterranean passages below Lo Pan's residence, they arrive at a log bridging a chasm (at Chapter 16/22:59), but the lower matte is so tight that it crops the Spanish moss hanging from the log at mid-strand, giving

the viewer no idea of how deep the chasm is, robbing a costly effects shot of its entire point; 2) When Gracie and Miao Lin are levitated during a ceremony preliminary to their marriage to Lo Pan, the two-shot commencing at 17/24:16 is visibly squeezed to fit both actresses onscreen at once; and 3) Later in the film, when Egg Shen (Victor Wong) and Gracie point offscreen to important action (at 19/39:44 and 39:53, respectively), they literally *point offscreen*—with their gestures cut off at the forearm! Similarly, John J. Lloyd's breathtaking, **BLADE RUNNER**-influenced production design loses its spaciousness, and the characters tend to cram, rather than assemble, onscreen.

The practice of enlarging a laser image to satisfy the largest possible audience isn't offensive in itself; the practice of misrepresenting that image with 2.30 or 2.35 matting, however, *is*. Who wouldn't prefer a semi-cropped, yet compositionally faithful, 1.75 transfer to the very same thing, albeit with important top and bottom information deliberately masked to preserve an illusion of theatrical fidelity? In this case, we get the latter—a "TV Safe" souvenir of **BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA**—in a sleeve that promises us a perfect miniature of the film itself.

THE FUGITIVE VOLUMES 1-5

1963-5, Image Entertainment (LD),
D, \$29.98 each

THE FUGITIVE: THE JUDGMENT

1967, Image/Worldvision (LD),
D, \$29.98

Who knows how or why these things happen? I watched *THE FUGITIVE* regularly when it was a Tuesday night series on ABC-TV (1963-67), but have felt indifferent

to it for the past twenty-odd years, without sampling any of the reruns being broadcast daily on cable's Arts & Entertainment Network. When A&E showed the first and final episodes back-to-back one evening last August, coinciding with the release of Andrew Davis' new movie adaptation starring Harrison Ford, I was intrigued enough to run down *Memory Lane*. As I say, who knows how or why these things happen, but I was in the right mood, the planets were in the correct alignment, and that three-hour session inspired a new pet obsession. After seeing the series' pilot and finale, I knew that I wouldn't feel completely satisfied until I had also seen all 120 episodes, the entire four years that the innocent, doggedly pursued Dr. Richard Kimble (David Janssen) had spent on the lam. Only then could I re-experience the two-hour climax as it was meant to be felt.

Alas, shortly after A&E's inspiring back-to-back broadcast, they decided to drop *THE FUGITIVE* from their fall schedule. Happily, Nu Ventures Home Video has issued 20 volumes of a *FUGITIVE* "Collector's Anthology Series" on VHS. Each handsomely packaged cassette contains two vintage episodes and delightful, brand-new introductions by Barry Morse, the Canadian actor who played opposite Janssen as Philip Gerard, "the police lieutenant obsessed with his capture."

As anyone who dipped even slightly into the A&E repeats can attest, not all of the series' episodes were pivotal; the color episodes from the final season, in particular, lacked a certain measure of the show's original *noir* atmosphere, Gerard appeared less frequently, and many scripts concentrated more on the plights of guest stars than that of the falsely-convicted wife-killer, Kimble. Nu

Ventures' anthology weeds out the chaff and isolates what hardcore fugiphiles would probably consider the best 1/3 of the series. The only major omissions from the anthology are the first and final episodes, which have been reserved for home video distribution by Worldvision, the series' TV syndicator; Worldvision Home Video sells them together as *THE FUGITIVE: THE PREMIERE EPISODE* and *THE FUGITIVE: THE JUDGMENT*, priced at \$29.95.

The Nu Ventures tapes are a sustained delight, although the liner notes (frequently paraphrased by Morse in his brisk, avuncular intros) tend to reveal more details than viewers may like to know in advance. If you can't find them in your favorite store, you may order them directly by writing to Nu Ventures Video, 13101 Washington Blvd., Suite 132, Los Angeles CA, 90066. VISA and MasterCard orders can be called into the company toll-free at 1-800-742-3442.

The first five volumes of the "Collector's Anthology Series" (and *THE JUDGMENT*) have also made the jump to laserdisc, courtesy of Image Entertainment, which is a terrific way of seeing them. *VOLUME 1* (#ID1990NU) contains Vincent McEveety's "The Girl from Little Egypt" (aired 12/24/63; 50m 9s with introduction), in which a distraught Pamela Tiffin accidentally side-swipes Kimble with her car and lets him recover in her apartment, attracting the suspicion of married lover Ed Nelson. The episode contains generous flashbacks (experienced during Kimble's delirium) of Kimble arguing with his wife Helen, his sighting of the One-Armed Man (Bill Raisch), his trial, and Gerard's expert prosecution testimony—which makes "Girl" a superior introduction to the series than the actual pilot. The companion episode is "The End

is *But the Beginning*" (1/12/65; 49m 53s), which Walter Grauman directed shortly after completing the suspenseful *LADY IN A CAGE* (1964). Here, Kimble is presented with an opportunity to fake his own death, with the assistance of a timid secretary (expertly played by Barbara Barrie) who falls for him. It's a tense episode with a genuinely surprising fourth act (as long as you avoid those confounded liner notes).

An even better demonstration of the program's dramatic range is delivered on *VOLUME 2* (#ID1991NU), which features the early, two-part episode "Never Wave Goodbye" (10/8 and 10/15/63; 49m 11s, 49m 29s), directed by William Graham and written by Hank Searles. This story finds Kimble in Santa Barbara, California, working happily as a sailmaker and resisting an encouraged romantic attraction to his employer's daughter (Susan Oliver), which threatens to give him the roots that would make him more susceptible to arrest. Robert Duvall plays his rival, a Norwegian expatriate who betrayed his own relatives to the Nazis as a child, and cannot be trusted with the truth of Kimble's identity. Gerard figures prominently in the plot and comes very close to collaring his quarry; it's one of Morse's best performances in the series.

VOLUME 3 (#ID1992NU) spotlights two excellent episodes featuring the character of Fred Johnson, the One-Armed Man. Jerry Hopper's "Search in a Windy City" (2/4/64; 49m 32s) finds Kimble befriended by Mike Decker (Pat Hingle), a Chicago columnist convinced of his innocence, who pays a network of underworld informants to lure and entrap the wandering Johnson. When the scheme backfires, Decker is

obliged to deliver a story... and plots to deliver Kimble to Gerard. This is an exceptional episode, helped in large part by Nan Martin's strong performance as Decker's alcoholic wife, and the payoff is one of the series' most frustrating—and, therefore, one of its dramatic best. (*TWIN PEAKS* fans may be interested to know that Hingle's character lives in the *Chalfonte Apartments*!) Side Two contains Richard Donner's "Wife Killer" (1/11/66), a riveting piece starring Janice Rule as a reporter who, in exchange for an exclusive, helps Kimble to save a wounded Johnson's life in order to extract a confession. It was in this episode that Johnson first confessed to the murder of Helen Kimble. Kevin McCarthy also appears as Rule's cooperative, smitten publisher.

Barry Morse appears in neither of the episodes on *VOLUME 4* (#ID1993NU), in which Kimble takes time off from his own runaway existence to assist the plights of other fugitives. In "Cry Uncle" (12/1/64; 49m 13s), directed by James Goldstone, a flight from a police-infested area lands Kimble in a children's orphanage, where he is blackmailed by an emotionally-disturbed 12 year-old (Donald Losby) into posing as his uncle and assisting his plans for escape. A bespectacled Ronny Howard also appears in one of his most eccentric juvenile roles. Kimble works as a laundromat driver in Alex March's "This'll Kill You" (1/18/66), whose employer (Mickey Rooney) is a former bookie trying to reunite with a lost love (Nita Talbot) while eluding another active element of his past—a contract on his life. Excellent performances and deft direction help this volume to easily overcome the absence of Kimble's hawk-browed adversary.

Morse returns aggressively to the fore in *VOLUME 5* (#ID1994NU), which includes two particularly fine episodes. "Nemesis" (10/13/64; 49m 39s) stars a 12 year-old Kurt Russell as Gerard's son—long deprived of fatherly attention because of the lieutenant's obsessive quest—who unwittingly stows away in Kimble's getaway car. Directed by Jerry Hopper, this segment is memorable for the young Russell's sensitive portrayal, which ably depicts the boy's emotional confusion as he finds himself caught between his love for his parent and his dawning recognition that, contrary to what his father says, Kimble is indeed innocent. "Ill Wind" (3/8/66; 49m 4s), directed by Joseph Sargent, is perhaps the best of the segments available thus far on disc. Here, Kimble is captured by Gerard near the Mexican border, where he has been working as a migrant farm worker. Their homeward journey is interrupted by a hurricane, from which they find shelter with a group of Kimble's coworkers who, in their ignorance, try to help their friend by making attempts on Gerard's life. *THE FUGITIVE* simply doesn't get any better than this.

Image Entertainment's *THE FUGITIVE: THE JUDGMENT* (#ID-585WV; 102m 39s), the series' two-part finale, carries no original airdate on its sleeve and it contains no introduction by Barry Morse; after sampling the Nu Ventures releases, this is a definite drawback. This grand climax originally earned a 45.9 rating and a 72% share of the nation's viewing audience when it was first aired in 1967, and it still ranks as the third-highest-rated program in the history of American television.

When watched in close proximity with "The Girl from Little Egypt," the viewer becomes aware of several careless inaccuracies in



Richard Kimble (David Janssen) gets clamped by the long arm of the law (Barry Morse) in ABC-TV's hit series, *THE FUGITIVE*.

THE JUDGMENT. The date of Helen Kimble's murder is given by Gerard as September 19, 1960, whereas "Girl" mentions 1961 as the year of her death. Elsewhere, Kimble calculates that he has tracked Johnson from one end of the country to the other "a dozen times," whereas Gerard calculates in "Girl" (the third episode!) that he has *already* followed Kimble's movements back-and-forth across the country "more than a dozen times." One of the most annoying details occurs at the very moment the series has been building toward, the final friendly handshake between Kimble and Gerard. Viewed from the rear, Gerard can be seen saying *something* in farewell to the man he has stalked for

four years, but the line was eliminated by director Don Medford! The "day the running stopped," as identified by narrator William Conrad at the program's close, is September 5—the date of this historic episode's *Canadian* broadcast, identifying the source print as Canadian. On the Japanese import disc of this episode, Conrad intones a *different* date: August 29, the date the program originally aired in the United States!

The image quality of the five Image/Nu Ventures discs is exceptional, especially those episodes photographed in silvery chiaroscuro by Emmy-winning Meredith Nicholson; they also lend themselves well to amplification. Unfortunately, the earliest episodes show

evidence of time-compression, but this is more the fault of the supplier (Worldvision) than the distributors (Nu Ventures and Image Entertainment). *THE JUDGMENT* is a more problematic case; while the color is surprisingly strong (even more potent than in the versions recently rebroadcast on A&E and NBC), the resolution is comparatively soft, as if it were taken from an IB-Tech 16mm source. The soundtrack is also less crisp than it should be, with a needlessly overpowering bass that obscures a word of dialog or two. The episode is not time-compressed and therefore plays more soberly than did its wildly hopped-up presentation on A&E, which made J.D. Cannon's twitchy performance as murder witness Lloyd Chandler look patently ludicrous.

HORROR OF DRACULA

1958, Warner #NWL-11499,
(Japanese import), D,
¥4841, 81m 2s

DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE

1967, Warner #NWL-11069,
(Japanese import), D,
¥4841, 92m 6s

DRACULA A.D. 1972

1972, Warner #NWL-11074,
(Japanese import), D,
¥4841, 95m 30s

Warner Home Video (Japan) has undertaken the release of several Hammer horror classics on laserdisc, beginning with these three Dracula titles—which offer a kind of hopscotch overview of the entire series (1958-73)—and continuing with two just-announced Frankenstein offerings (*THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* and *FRANKENSTEIN MUST BE DESTROYED*). Unlike Warner's domestic attempts at putting Hammer on disc, the results here are a Hammer maven's dream. The



*Christopher Lee (sporting a wristband that he wears to this day) hovers over Melissa Stribling in a classic publicity pose for **HORROR OF DRACULA**.*

packaging is handsome (with the name "Dracula" presented in Japanese letters stylized to resemble blood-dripping fangs!), the transfers are richly colorful, and the source materials are as complete as can be found anywhere.

To answer the most obvious question first, Warner Japan's **HORROR OF DRACULA** is not the legendary "Japanese version" of the film; unfortunately, these mythic, ultra-gory versions are turning out to be no more than publicity mill myths. Indeed, it is not even **DRACULA** (the film's original British title). But the main titles are proudly letterboxed at 1.66:1 and the print *does* contain the bloody shot of Lucy (Carol Marsh)'s staking that was grievously omitted

from Warner's domestic laser release. The quality of the color and image clarity are also greatly improved over the American disc. The image has the velveteen softness that one associates with the best British color cinematography of this period, but the colors on display are noticeably richer than on the American disc. When Dracula (Christopher Lee) bursts into the library, his snarling mouth smattered with gouts of blood, the reds and blues are unbelievably striking—identical to those in the frame enlargement used for the cover of **CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN #8**. Jack Asher's Eastman-color cinematography (processed by Technicolor) is manipulative in the best sense, and in this one

shot, we can actually feel the genre being catapulted into the modern world.

While the print is as complete as we've seen, the transfer itself is not without minor problems. There is a 5m stretch—from Harker's awakening after the library scene to his first glimpse of the vampire woman in her stone crypt [Side 1/16:38-21:30]—that contains an unusual amount of speckling, and the first closeup of Dracula in sated repose bears a vertical scratch. And a 5s stock shot of the full moon passing behind clouds as Lucy awaits a visit from Dracula [Side 1/45:31-36] jitters the entire time it is onscreen.

Digital recording has also done wonders with emphasizing the film's subtle sound mix; in the moments preceding and following Lucy's staking, there is a palpable ambience of early morning in which birds can be heard stirring to life, recalling Jonathan Harker's unsettling remark outside Castle Dracula, "There were no birds singing..." James Bernard's nervous, lashing, ebullient score also sounds much fuller, although its most piercing highs occasionally solicit distortion.

The disc is subtitled in Japanese, but the most horrific moments unfold without dialog, and the content elsewhere is sufficiently gripping that the titles are easily overlooked almost from the start. Though not definitive, this is a fine presentation of one of the genre's most important films.

Fisher's direct sequel to **HORROR OF DRACULA—DRACULA, PRINCE OF DARKNESS** (1966)—was the series' only anamorphic (Techniscope) entry, and as such, begs for the laserdisc treatment. Warner is the current owner of this property, which was distributed theatrically by 20th Century Fox, but it has been neglected here in favor of Freddie Francis' less satisfying **DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM**

THE GRAVE [reviewed VW 16:12]. The disc looks attractive, but there are points worth quibbling over. The colors are distinct but subtler than they should be, as if the transfer supervisor misinterpreted the intensity of the day-glo colors throbbing under the main titles and toned them down. Similarly, the well-staged day-for-night sequence of barmaid Zena (Barbara Ewing) encountering Dracula's coach during her homeward walk through the woods [Side 1/43:33] has not been adequately tinted, and subsequently seems to take place in broad daylight. The mono soundtrack sounds exceptionally clean, thanks to the spacious orchestration of one of James Bernard's most elegant scores. The disc contains no additional footage, gory or otherwise.

We would have preferred an uncut laserdisc of Peter Sasdy's ambitious **TASTE THE BLOOD OF**

DRACULA (1969) to Alan Gibson's **DRACULA A.D. 1972**, but the disc succeeds in bringing the few qualities of this anachronistic mess to the fore. This film reteamed Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee in their original roles for the first time since **HORROR OF DRACULA**. They were obviously aware of the historic importance of their rematch and are in peak form, particularly during their climactic confrontation; when Cushing shouts "Look on me, Dracula—and remember!" Lee meets the challenge triumphantly by giving his demonic all to the role for the first time since 1958.

The film is also well-served by the luminous photography of Dick Bush (Ken Russell's DP on many films, including **TOMMY**), Les Bowie's matte paintings and smoky disintegration effects, and—on an altogether lower level—the howlingly bad, wannabe-hip dialog of its thirty-year-old teenagers is a hoot. (Example: "Okay, but if we do get to summon-up the Big Daddy with the horns and the tail,

he gets to bring his own liquor, his own bird, and his own pot!") Even worse are the sour and self-conscious *double entendres* ("Come in for a bite?"), which fail in their intention to shield the film from its inability to thrill an audience.

The disc runs approximately 10s longer than Warner's domestic theatrical prints, which deleted two brief, climactic shots: a second view of Van Helsing leaning heavily on the spade that forces Dracula onto a bed of spikes in a booby-trapped grave, followed by a second, extremely juicy close-up of a stake squirting effusively while poking through Dracula's back. The shots immediately follow Jessica Van Helsing (Stephanie Beacham)'s scream.

Each of Warner's Dracula imports contains a one-sided, illustrated insert sheet with background notes on each feature, written in Japanese. None of the discs have been chapter-encoded, and they contain no supplementary features.

THE 7 FACES OF DR. LAO

1964, MGM/UA #ML101192, D/LB, \$34.95, 99m 30s

Based on Charles G. Finney's 1935 novel **THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO**, this is one of George Pal's most important films; it may be eccentric and peppered with flaws, but these very idiosyncrasies somehow increase one's affection for this film, whose charm, wisdom, and courage of address place it second only to **THE TIME MACHINE** among Pal's wondrous achievements. The travelling circus of Dr. Lao (Tony Randall)—a mysterious, impish Chinaman who claims to be 7,322 years old—arrives in the small, western town of Abelone, whose stifled and unimaginative population are on the verge of selling their collective



DRACULA is spinning in his grave—on Japanese Laserdisc!



Two out of seven isn't bad: Tony Randall as Pan and Medusa in George Pal's beguiling *THE 7 FACES OF DR. LAO*.

properties to opportunistic businessman Clinton Stark (Arthur O'Connell), unable to foresee—as he has—that Abalone will become a boom town with the coming of railroads. Lao's peculiar circus, with its fantastic attractions (Medusa, the Abominable Snowman, Merlin the Magician, the Loch Ness Monster, etc.), is like no other and becomes a kind of “mirror” to the townsfolk—a young woman repressed by widowhood (Barbara Eden), her fatherless son (Kevin Tate), an aging cynic who has turned his back on the ideals of his youth, an older woman who has soured from an excess of love (Minerva Urecal), and another (Lee Patrick) who has drifted into romantic expectations that can never be realized. For them, the circus is an initially unpleasant experience that ultimately reawakens them—like a Zen Master's slap—to an appreciation of the magic of being alive, and the knowledge that life is

limited only by one's awareness of its possibilities.

One of this film's most valuable qualities is that, like *THE TIME MACHINE* with its Old World warmth, *THE 7 FACES OF DR. LAO* reflects the gratitude, as well as the realistic concerns, of a hard-working American immigrant. The shortsightedness of the Abelonians extends, in one or two cases, to forms of prejudice, and Hungarian *émigré* Pal uses the seven faces of his inscrutable imp—Merlin of Britain, the Gorgon of Greece, the sea serpent of Scotland, Appolonius of Rome, the Tibetan Yeti, and so on—to represent the ethnic variety that is, or should be, America. Indeed, Randall's portrayal of Lao is so deliberately inconsistent of voice and mannerisms that he appears to be a personification of the magical (and ancient) variety of Mankind itself. Charles Beaumont's screenplay boasts some

of the richest dialog to be found in the genre (“Do you know what wisdom is?” “No, sir.” “Wise answer.”) and Robert Bronner's color photography is sometimes intoxicating. Unfortunately, the film's special effects are sadly erratic—the color of Jim Danforth's Loch Ness Monster changes from shot to shot—and there is some painfully bad fireworks animation. It is one of the shames of recording history that Leigh Harline's heartbreakingly beautiful score has never been issued on record (with the exception of a repulsively jazzed-up cover version of the main theme that once appeared on the B-side of a Lalo Schiffrin single).

MGM/UA has treated this film very well on disc. The image is correctly letterboxed at 1.85:1, which reveals some details that the pan&scan version cannot access (such as the extreme left frame “disappearance” of a guinea pig

conjured by Merlin). The color and clarity are vivid, but some footage—primarily of the spfx variety—is diminished by the fleeting presence of scratches and dirt. At Chapter 12/14:50, we noticed the color separations of a dissolve shot to be misaligned and, at Chapter 23/39:40-40:03, the sound of applause carries a strange electronic distortion. Otherwise, the mono sound is lovely. The film has been given 23 chapter marks and a 3m 8s full-screen trailer is also included, which manages to include most of the film's great moments but not a bit of its elegant rhythm.

• **THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO**
• **THUNDERBIRD 6**

1966/68, MGM/UA #ML102878,
D/LB, \$39.95, 92m 52s/89m 1s

Never having been an enduring fan of Gerry and Sylvia Anderson's marionette animation, I'm astonished by how much pleasure I've derived from this "MGM Double Feature Disc." The Anderson's popular TV series **THUNDERBIRDS** thrilled British, Canadian, and Australian fans of that era and inspired these two, anamorphic "SuperMarionation" spin-off features—which were released in America by Metro Goldwyn Mayer (back when typical MGM releases were **WILD WILD PLANET** and **THE GREEN SLIME**) without much success. Composed of only 32 half-hour episodes, the series had limited syndication appeal in America, where it remains best-known in the form of two re-edited, feature-length, direct-to-video creations entitled **THUNDERBIRDS IN OUTER SPACE** and **THUNDERBIRDS: COUNTDOWN TO DISASTER**. In Japan, the entire series has been issued in two mammoth (eight disc) box sets, and these two features have been released on

disc in pan&scan format. One of the most appealing aspects of this new domestic release is that both films have been letterboxed. The prospect of seeing two all-puppet films in the widescreen format is an offer that doesn't often come along, and it makes this fabulous, two-disc set a kind of double novelty. Letterboxed (1.85:1) trailers for both films are also included.

Retired astronaut Jeff Tracy (whose familiar voice belongs to Peter Dyneley, the star of **THE MANSTER!**) runs International Rescue, a sophisticated aerial rescue complex, with his sons Virgil, Alan, Scott, John, and Gordon—all named, obviously, after the first generation of American astronauts—each of whom pilots a special Thunderbird vehicle capable of rescuing missions in distress on land, in the air, or under the sea. When they aren't out saving their accident-prone colleagues in the world of science, the Tracy men (and their resident bespectacled genius, Brains) live in resplendent luxury, lolling by the pool, or passing the time in nightclubs. They say things like, "Wish John was here to enjoy the fun... but I guess *someone's* got to man the Space Satellite!"

THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO is virtually plotless, and spends a mind-numbing amount of time preparing for blast-offs and landings that eventually go awry, setting them up for equally prolonged rescues by Our Heroes. **TAG** breaks from its set agenda of endless preparations, countdowns, button-pushings, lock-downs, against-the-clock rescues, and roger-wilko dialog only once, and brilliantly so. The film's outstanding sequence takes us inside a marionette's subconscious, as young Alan Tracy dreams of being whisked away by the lovely Lady Penelope to an evening at that exclusive

nightclub, The Swinging Star. Everything is perfect, glamorous, and deliriously naïve. Entertainment is provided by The Shadows ("They play only at the Swinging Star because they are... *way out*," Penelope purrs) and "the most famous star in the universe," *Cliff Richard Jr.* Voiced by Cliff Richard himself, the singer is accompanied by The Shadows for "Shooting Star"—a sure-fire contender for the first all-puppet rock video, and a sheer delight that almost justifies the cost of the entire set. The sequence perfectly captures the naiveté of the dreamer, and makes a believable curve into the realm of nightmare just before he tumbles, Nemo-like, out of bed. Fortunately, "Alan's Dream" is individually chaptered, because this type of sequence begs to be replayed often.

THUNDERBIRD 6 (made two years later) finds the Andersons less impressed with the novelty of their puppets and more intent on providing their audience with a coherent, feature-length storyline. As a result, **T6** has not only dated well in the context of the Andersons' work, but it holds up as a rather estimable collaboration between the worlds of puppetry, science fiction, and miniature special effects (the latter masterminded by Derek Meddings). Here, Brains designs a new airborne vehicle called SkyShip One, which is hijacked (along with Lady Penelope) during its first around-the-world voyage by ruthless saboteurs. The genuinely exciting finale finds the SkyShip teetering precariously atop a radio tower, as the Thunderbirds scurry into action to rescue its crew from certain death. The title refers to Jeff Tracy's belief that an additional Thunderbird rescue vehicle is needed, and a series of comic vignettes in which Brains' imaginative prototypes are rejected,



Russ Tamblyn in a rare, non-dancing moment from George Pal's *tom thumb*.

one after the other. Both features were directed by David Lane, and bombastically scored (with VU meters pushed well into the red) by Barry Gray.

The disc presentation is gorgeously colorful and transferred from generally pristine materials; although both features were lensed in Techniscope (2.35:1), their screen ratios on disc are, respectively, 2:47:1 and 2:40:1 (ie., a little tight on top but more than acceptable). The end credits of *TAG*—a live-action rendition of the TV show's theme song by the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines!—is in worse condition than the footage preceding it, and was obviously culled (unlike the marionette footage) from a battered,

barely surviving, 35mm print. Sadly, *TAG*'s monaural sound is also in generally weak condition: tinny, hissy, with very little bottom. *T6*, though also in mono, sounds incomparably richer and more detailed.

Our verdict: F-A-B!

tom thumb

1958, MGM/UA #ML100430, D/LB, \$34.95, 93m 37s

George Pal first indulged his love for the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm in this generally plotless, largely musical, MGM extravaganza. Russ Tamblyn stars as the diminutive son magically bestowed on a childless couple (Bernard Miles and Jessie Matthews) when the

husband, an old woodcutter, bows to a request from the Queen of the Forest (Ann Thorneburn), that the oldest, tallest oak tree in the woods be left standing. What follows is a long stretch of wild musical numbers, in which Tamblyn and Pal's Puppetoons engage in dated, yet fearlessly exuberant choreography (Mary Tyler Moore used to dance this way at living room get-togethers on *THE DICK VAN DYKE SHOW*), and a series of coy romantic interludes between the immortal Thorneburn and an all-too-human, woodwind musician named Woody (Alan Young). Tellingly, the threadbare story—a confused retelling of *PINOCCHIO*—begins only after the side-break of this gorgeous MGM/UA disc, and finds the naïve Tom misled into a life of crime by two bungling crooks (Terry-Thomas and Peter Sellers), who use him to steal a bag of gold, a theft for which his parents are wrongly blamed. Can Tom and Woody save Mom and Pop from "The Masked Lasher" before it's too late?

Scripted by Ladislas Fodor, this is the only Pal production that strains at all against the hyperbolic promise, "Entertainment for All Ages." Children love this film, but even when the lives of Tom's parents are placed in jeopardy, it hasn't any of the bittersweet philosophizing or dangerous shadings that characterize Pal's most durable films. Instead, adult viewers are left to take their pleasure from the film's wry, silly humor, best exemplified by Thomas & Sellers' scheming, *commedia dell'arte* villains, who plunder a treasury whose sacked holdings are labelled "Gold," "Gold" and "More Gold." However, the outstanding sequence, for all ages, is the theme song performed by Wah Chang's delightful character, The Yawning Man (voiced by Stan Freberg). Tom's wise Oriental roly-poly toy, Con-Fu-Shon (spoken by Dallas

McKennon, later the voice of the animated Archie), seems to foreshadow the title character of Pal's magnificent **THE 7 FACES OF DR. LAO**. Individually chaptered, this charming highlight will surely be revisited more often by owners of this disc than the film itself. Also worth noting is Tom's fascinating dance with a two-dimensional drawing of himself, torn from his drawing pad, which anticipates the miraculous, stained-glass knight of Barry Levinson's **YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES** (1985).

tom thumb has been letterboxed at approximately 1.80:1, with a minimum of peripheral cropping; the compositions look unfailingly accurate. The image itself is so sharp that Tom Howard's Oscar-winning optical printing frequently telegraphs effects with isolated patches of grain, and the eye-popping color is at times almost too strong. The monaural soundtrack is fine. There are 24 chapter marks (including one for each of the film's songs), and also a 2m 25s theatrical trailer, which is presented full-screen and looks a bit yellowish, but otherwise okay.

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

1968, MGM/UA #ML103104,
D/S/SS/LB, \$69.95

MGM/UA Home Video and Turner Entertainment are commemorating the 25th Anniversary of Stanley Kubrick's epoch-making interstellar spectacle with this, its sixth and finest NTSC laserdisc pressing to date. The three-disc set is presented in CAV (except for the end credits and exit music, which appear in CLV on Side 6) with a screen ratio of approximately 2.25:1; like MGM/UA's budget-priced CLV release of last year, this transfer—unlike

the Japanese import and Voyager Company editions—was culled from **2001**'s original 65mm Super Panavision materials. Geoffrey Unsworth's 65mm photography was intended to be projected onto a deep curved screen, and his compositions reflect a constant awareness of this destination; for instance, the scene of Bowman (Kier Dullea) and Poole (Gary Lockwood) conspiring in the pod before the silent, deciphering eye of their malfunctioning, megalomaniacal HAL 9000 computer not only forfeits the spherical ambience of the pod itself on video, but the flattening of the image deprives HAL's penetrating gaze from its position of primacy in the composition. With such concavity unavailable to one's flat or convex home monitor, an occasional fish-eyed (or HAL-eyed) look appears in some shots, as well as some minor, easily ignored distortion at the peripheral extremes of the frame. These factors are not in the least detrimental to the experience of watching **2001** at home, but even under maximum viewing conditions, they do tend to remind us of the theatrical experience rather than replicate it.

The film is accompanied by all of its attendant musical framing, each instance of which is prominently labelled onscreen (Overture, Intermission, Entr'acte, Exit Music), although an explanation on the chapter directory would have been sufficient; Voyager remains the only company to provide these bonuses with the blank screen they demand. The side breaks are well-chosen, sometimes humorously so, with one major exception: Side 5 follows the film's stunning final image with a programmed pause (followed by a supplementary section of 69 production photographs, accessible

only by punching in the chapter number), and we must get up, cross the room, and flip the disc to enjoy the post-orgasmic resolve of the end credits and the lovely "Blue Danube." While the film's celebrated special effects remain state-of-the-art after a quarter century, the soundtrack is beginning to show its age. The ambient six-channel surround stereo is pleasing when amplified, but a closer examination (via headphones) reveals the pre-digital shortcomings of the classical music sources; we also noticed a rather prominent audio splice at Chapter 20/4:48.

As our more seasoned readers may recall, Stanley Kubrick was baffled by the public's initial (baffled) reaction to his film and voluntarily removed 19m of footage from **2001** within days of its April 6, 1968 premiere. The 70mm Cinerama roadshow prints already being exhibited in major North American cities were edited by hand according to MGM's instructions, usually by theater projectionists; this legendary "lost" footage has not been available since. The production photographs included at the end of Side 5 are primarily of interest for the few glimpses they provide of these deleted scenes, as well as some material never included in the final assembly. Only one photo is labelled as such—depicting a Macy's videophone that receives Heywood Floyd's order of a bushbaby for his daughter, Squirt (Vivian Kubrick)—but another, far more provocative shot shows Kier Dullea in his spacesuit posing shoulder-to-shoulder with his "ancestor," a nude prehistoric human considerably more evolved than the simians found in the "Dawn of Man" sequence. Who knows where, in the scheme of Kubrick's scenario, such a character might have appeared?

"I don't believe that the trims made a crucial difference," Kubrick says in Jerome Agel's out-of-print book *THE MAKING OF KUBRICK'S 2001* (Signet Books, 1970; p. 170). "I think it just affected some marginal people. The people who like it, like it no matter what its length, and the same holds true for the people who hate it." In other words, the cuts affected no substantive difference. On these grounds, especially with the collector's laserdisc market well in force, Kubrick would seem to have every reason to someday reinstate the material. Let's hope he does... for the 30th Anniversary disc, perhaps?

Side 6 includes a letterboxed trailer heralding its post-roadshow reissue ("Now at Popular Prices!") that misrepresents the film's pacing and intentions; it is also recorded louder than the preceding feature itself. The set concludes

with a 20m 47s promotional featurette—recorded at a much lower volume—of a reception for novelist Arthur C. Clarke at the Beverly Waldorf Hotel, filmed on the eve of the film's Los Angeles premiere. Clarke delivers a short and amusing speech about his happy collaboration with Kubrick, then fields questions from journalists about the movie (of which he has seen only parts), the space programs of the United States and Russia, extraterrestrial life, and UFO's (a subject he dodges most artfully). There is a naïve quality about the questions, the gathering, and the fashions of that giddy, uninformed evening that speak volumes about what an advancement *2001* would represent, once unveiled, to the language of cinema, and to the world at large. When Clarke states that the cultural shock of achieving contact with an alien society

would be "half the battle" of rising to their state of advancement—because contact would enable us to visualize and mimic what other species had found to be possible—he does so on the last night the world was unaware of a cinematic milestone whose "unprecedented range of ideas" would serve a similar purpose.

Included in the box (which is appreciably sturdier than the packaging used for MGM/UA's multi-disc animation releases) is a glossy, gatefold enclosure containing photos from the film and a 25th Anniversary memoir by Arthur C. Clarke. This text also accompanies MGM/UA's letterboxed, 25th Anniversary cassette (\$19.95) and tells us various things, none more amazing than the fact that Kubrick and special effects designer Douglas Trumbull made *2001* at the respective ages of 36 and 24!



THE DAWN OF WATCHDOGGERY?

"After seeing *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY* at a press preview, I was eager to see it again. Monday I cut poetry class, went to the theater, and discovered that someone else had been busy cutting.

"Stanley Kubrick's magnificent work has been butchered; the sad result of the critical abuse heaped upon it by critics conditioned by TV pacing and Lester's running, jumping, and falling-down editing. Almost 20 minutes have been removed, including some important plot threads. (This is a film that can ill-afford to spare them.) The cuts (numbering somewhere near 30) were rather sloppily made on the print Loew's Capitol is projecting. When I asked the manager about the deletions, he denied them, but a nearby projectionist added, 'They only cut some of the parts that didn't mean anything.'

"Some of the parts that didn't mean anything were: the computer asking for permission to repeat the message from Mission

Control telling of its own malfunction, parts of the scene in which Kier Dullea removes the faulty communications unit, the computer turning off the pod's radio before killing Gary Lockwood (thus puzzling the audience when Dullea asks HAL if he has been able to establish radio contact yet), and a host of visual cuts and shortenings of scenes.

"Besides the wholesale slicing, MGM added two meaningless title cards which grate on the film's visual style. The bastardization—complete with sloppy splices and uneven pacing—is now being viewed by even more confused audiences than met the original. But the most confused of all is MGM, whose lack of artistic faith in its own film led it to cut what it couldn't comprehend, thus destroying what it hoped to save."

—Jon F. Davison

"*Movie Mailbag*,"

The New York Times (April 28, 1968)

BIBLIO WATCHDOG

LON CHANEY

THE MAN BEHIND THE THOUSAND FACES

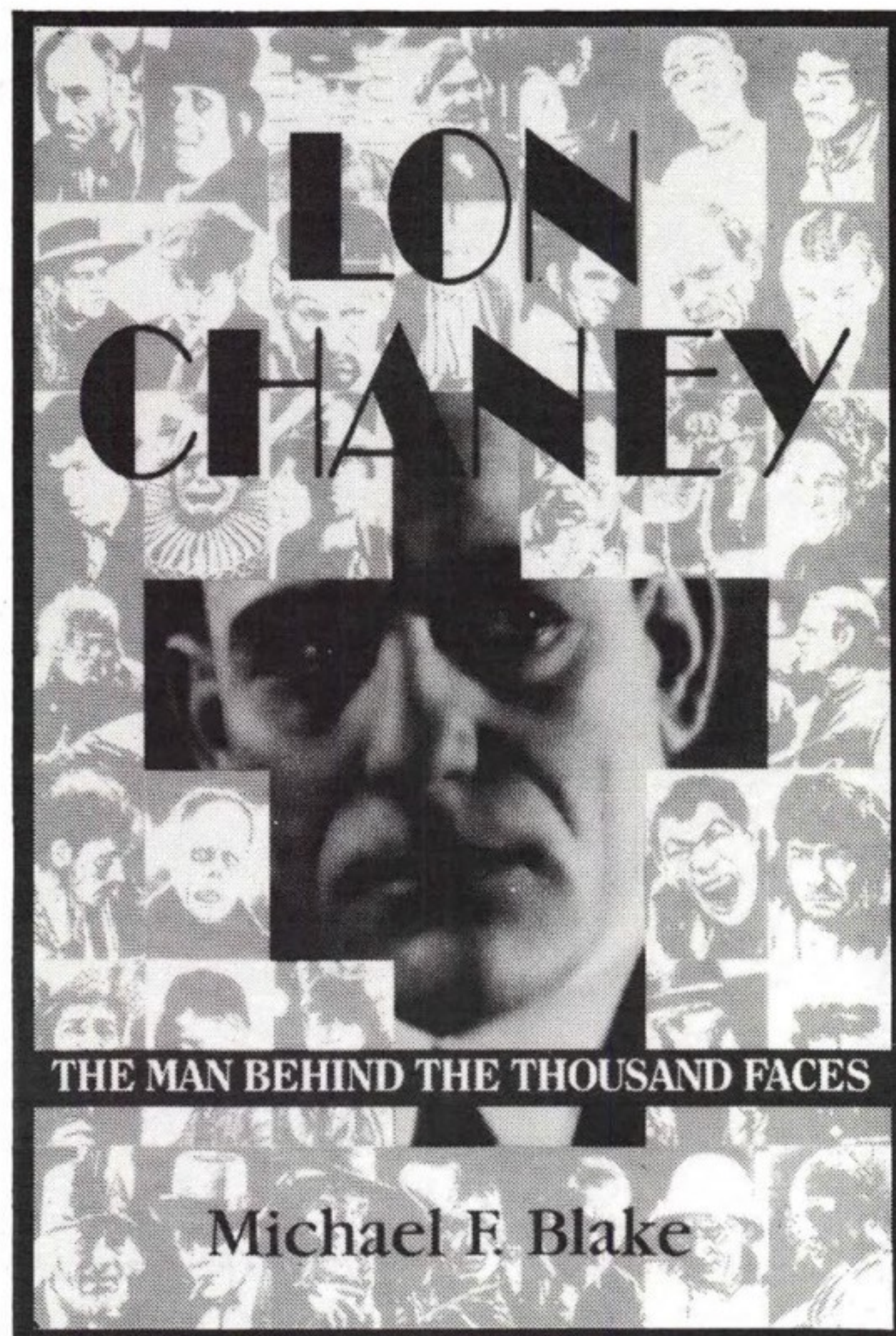
Michael F. Blake

Vestal Press (P.O. Box 97, Vestal, NY 13851-0097),
408 pages, \$29.95

Reviews by Tim Lucas

MICHAEL F. BLAKE'S new biography of Lon Chaney (1882-1930)—the screen's first great character actor and make-up artist—signals its status as a labor of love right away. Its lavish production values make it a pleasure to handle, and it is difficult to imagine a more urgently needed, film-related biography. Robert G. Anderson's long-out-of-print *FACES, FORMS, FILMS: THE ARTISTRY OF LON CHANEY* (A.S. Barnes, 1971), the only other book-length study, was well-intentioned, but more the work of an admirer than a historian. Its misinformed text (eg., "born Alonzo Chaney") led to the cementing of some basic mistakes in several important reference books. Consequently, we approach Blake's book with gratitude, and the pleasure of handling it only increases as the pages inside bring Lon Chaney's life, art, and times into reliable, relevant focus.

Fewer than 40 of Chaney's 156 films are known to exist today, yet most of these are within easy reach of video collectors. As a result, Blake is able to discuss Chaney's surviving films with greater immediacy, and a greater familiarity, than was possible two or three decades ago. And he doesn't allow the annoying inaccessibility of most of Chaney's work to impede him; whatever gaps exist in his first-hand knowledge are caulked with vivid descriptions of Chaney's early stage career and lost films, excerpted from the daily newspapers of his own era. The earliest of these clippings are particularly fascinating because they appeared at a time when the young actor surely paid close attention to his notices, and likely used their criticisms to inform his gift. Blake also brings his own professional craft as a Hollywood makeup artist to bear, using his trained eye to explain how several of Chaney's most famous makeups were achieved, while dispelling a number of ill-informed legends along the way. Blake's meticulous research also benefits from the personal reminiscences of



Chaney's family members, friends, and co-stars, who offer a collective witness of the man and artist that is pleasingly unlike the scowling, abusive myth of popular rumor and legend.

Among the book's most surprising discoveries are Chaney's boyhood friendship in Colorado Springs with the mysterious character actor Noble Johnson (if only some enterprising writer would tackle a biographic profile of *him!*), the fact that Chaney also wrote and directed several films for The Victor Company in the 1910s (none of which exist today), and the revelation that Lon's only child, Creighton Chaney (later "Lon Chaney Jr."), was born out of wedlock. A detailed filmography is also provided, along with a chronology, a glossary of makeup terms, and the complete reprinted texts of three articles penned by Chaney himself (one about the effects of incarceration on the human spirit, two on the subject of makeup), which are remarkable for their crisp,

earnest prose and the progressive, generous nature expressed within them.

Some readers may be disappointed by Blake's refusal to discuss or analyze Chaney's pioneering achievements as a "horror actor," or by the fact that only incidental glimpses are provided of Lon's famous son, whose successful career in films is summarized with titles like **OF MICE AND MEN**, **HIGH NOON**, and **THE DEFIANT ONES**. Some may also pine for a more infectious narrator; Blake's mild, matter-of-fact prose lacks the investment of heart and self that distinguishes great biographies from good ones. The biographer remains steadfastly objective and out-of-frame, leaving us to assume (for instance) that Chaney's example inspired him to become a makeup artist. We close the book appreciatively, but with a sense that its creation was funded with more patience than emotion.

LON CHANEY: THE MAN BEHIND THE THOUSAND FACES may not persuade a new generation of fans to rediscover Chaney's films, but it does provide the cleanest, most accurate and detailed record we're likely to see of his life and times. As such, it represents a significant and most valuable contribution to our literature of the cinema.

THE ILLUSTRATED VAMPIRE MOVIE GUIDE • THE ILLUSTRATED DINOSAUR MOVIE GUIDE

Stephen Jones

Titan Books (19 Valentine Place, London SE1 8QH, England), both 144 pages, £9.99 each

With the numbers 1 and 2 prominently displayed on their spines, these colorful trade paperbacks mark the beginning of a promising new series of reference guides. Written by former **SHOCK XPRESS** editor Stephen Jones, with entertaining introductions provided respectively by Peter Cushing and Ray Harryhausen, these books provide an ambitious, decade-by-decade listing of every vampire and dinosaur movie (and television program) ever made.

The reviews include title, original language title of foreign releases, date, director, primary cast, an opinionated description, and a judgment ranging from one to five bats or brontosauri. In a refreshing move, Jones has given his lowest rating the charitable description "for completists only," which relieves these books of the self-serving, smart-ass negativity that sours so many American reference guides; he may express disdain for certain films, but he doesn't belittle a reader's taste for wanting to sample everything.

While the capsules contained in these two volumes are more akin to popcorn than criticism, what

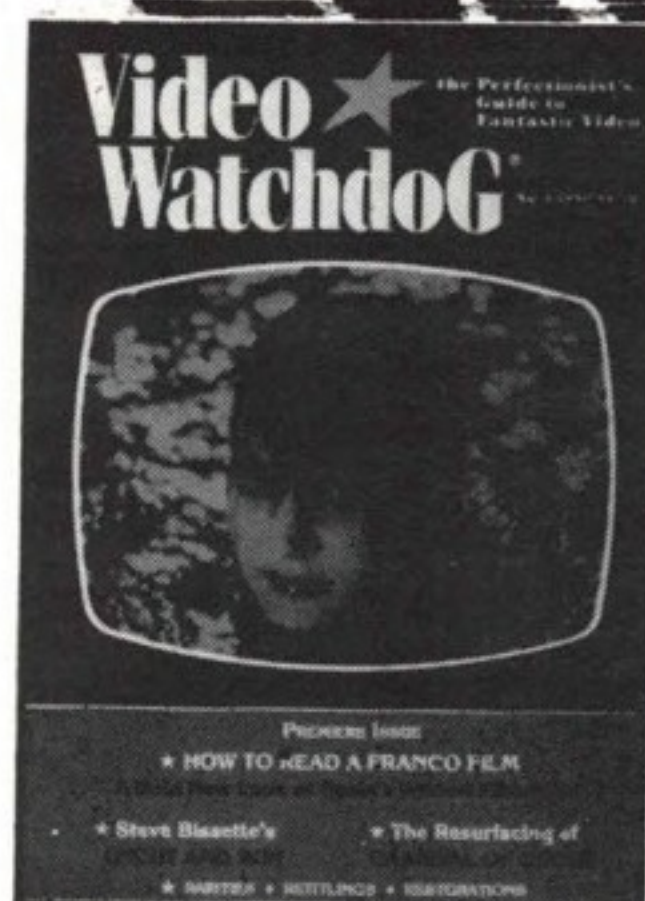
they lack in detail is more than compensated by their sheer breadth of coverage. The time-frame of the reviews is very *au courant*—Coppola's **BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA** and Spielberg's **JURASSIC PARK** are both represented—and they offer a wealth of information about obscure foreign titles, Adults Only ventures, and even 8mm amateur reels. The determination to be all-inclusive has resulted in a lot of arguable stuff making it into both books. The **VAMPIRE** guide includes the likes of Kubrick's **A CLOCKWORK ORANGE** (on the basis of one shot); as for the **DINOSAUR** volume, it's more accurately a generic "Giant Monster" or "Monster Attack" guide, including such non-prehistoria as **PINOCCHIO** (for *Monstro*), **BRIDE OF THE MONSTER** (for its "giant octopus"), the **JAWS** films, and **INVASION OF THE BEE GIRLS**. As Jones readily admits, it would be impossible to find, much less see, all of the films compiled in these volumes, and he squirms out of describing the rarest titles with variable degrees of success. He spices his **LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT** review (four bats) by mentioning that "most of the reels" of this lost film "have apparently been rediscovered," but runs out of gas when confronted with José María Zabalza's *El Retorno de los Vampiros* (1971), about which he sighs, "The title probably says it all."

There are some minor mistakes (like the amusing misstatement that Christopher Lee plays "Count Regular" in **BLOOD DEMON!**), the most serious being the incorrect titles—and, hence, alphabetical misplacement—of **ABBOTT & COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN** (listed under "M" for **MEET FRANKENSTEIN**) and **GURU THE MAD MONK** (renamed **GARU**). On the plus side, Jones offers some interesting, not commonly reported, observations from the British perspective, including the fact that **BLACK SUNDAY** and **LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS** (both 1960) were not released in the UK until 1968 and 1973, respectively. He also makes acknowledged use of recent discoveries (published in this magazine and others) to correct some long-standing errors, like the one about the producer of **ATOM AGE VAMPIRE** (say no more). What is most important about books of this type is factual reliability, and these two are better researched and more reliable than most.

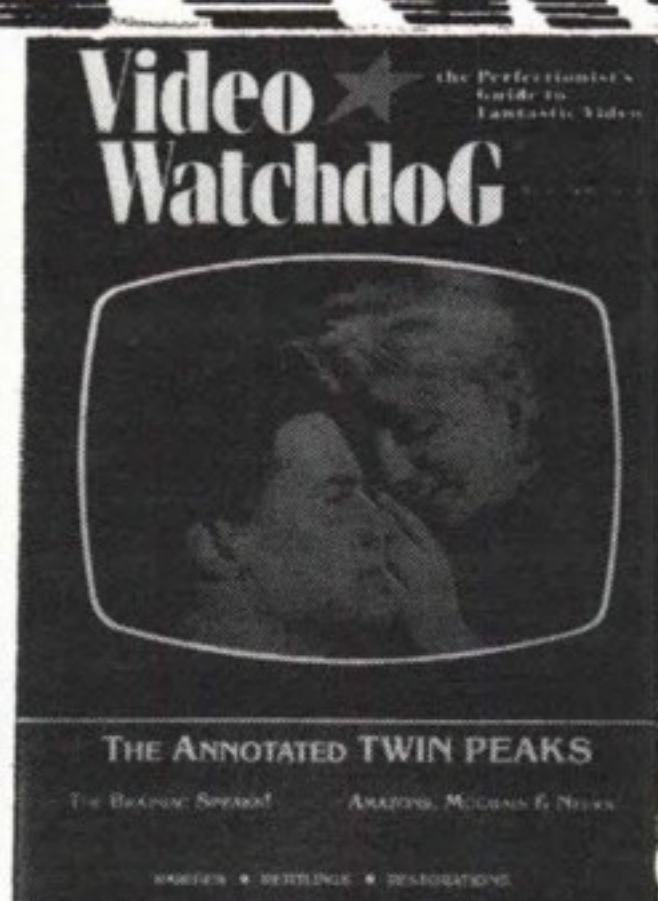
Both volumes are imaginatively designed (by Chris Teather) and overstuffed with rare posters, lobby cards, and stills (would you believe an actual photo from the missing Spider Pit sequence of **KING KONG**?). Many of these are reproduced in full color, which makes an already pleasing set quite indispensable. This is a series that deserves to continue.



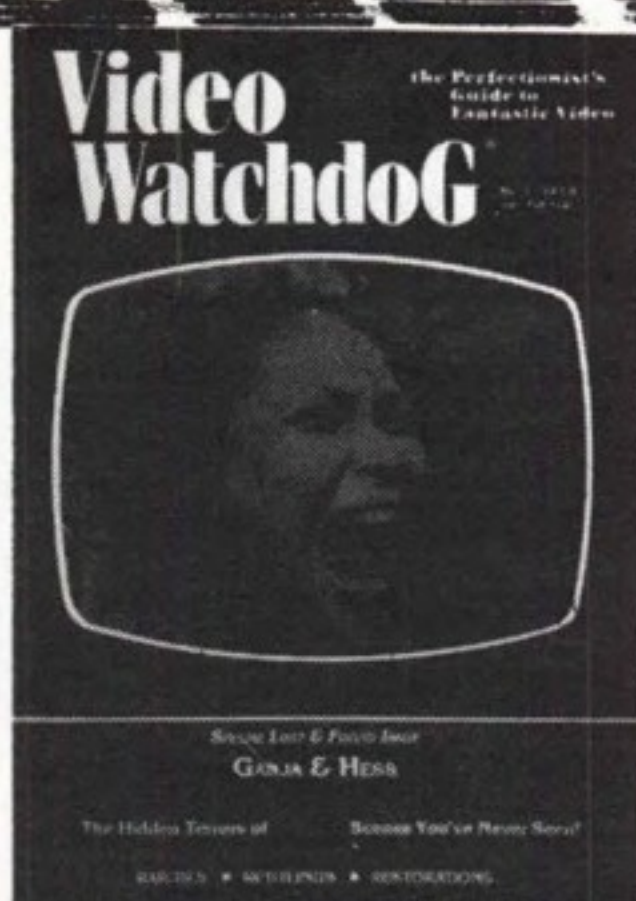
THE VW ENDANGERED LIST!



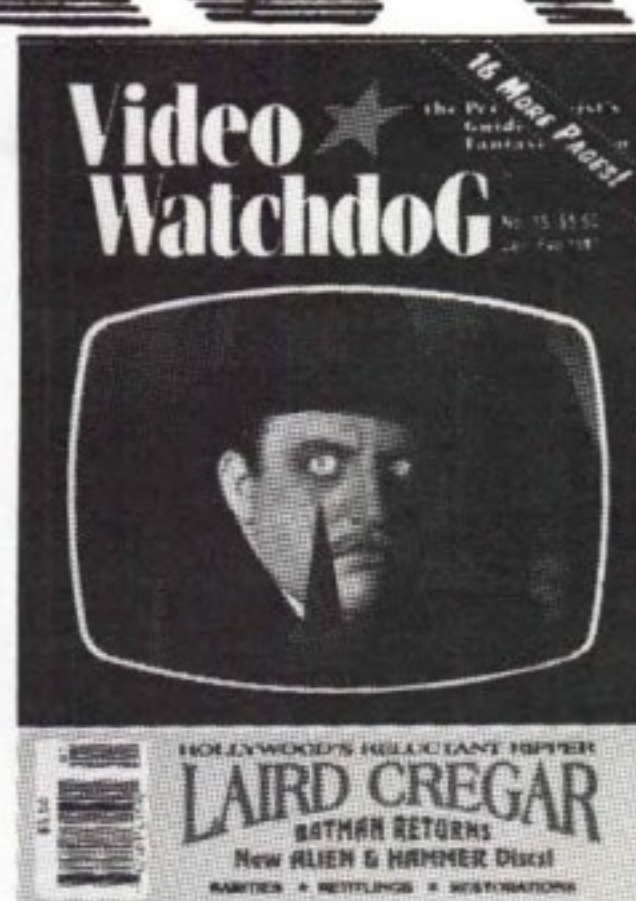
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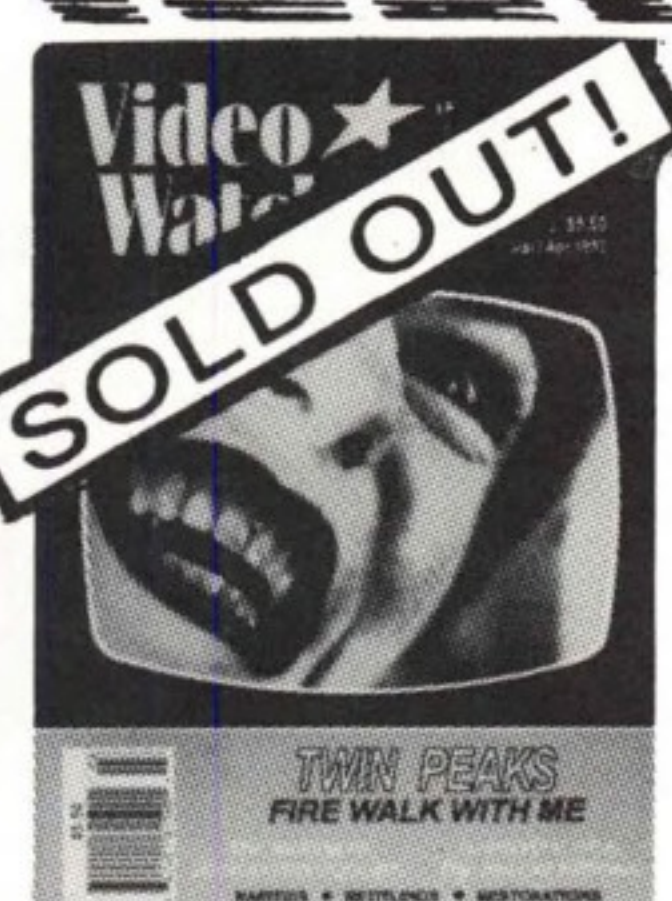
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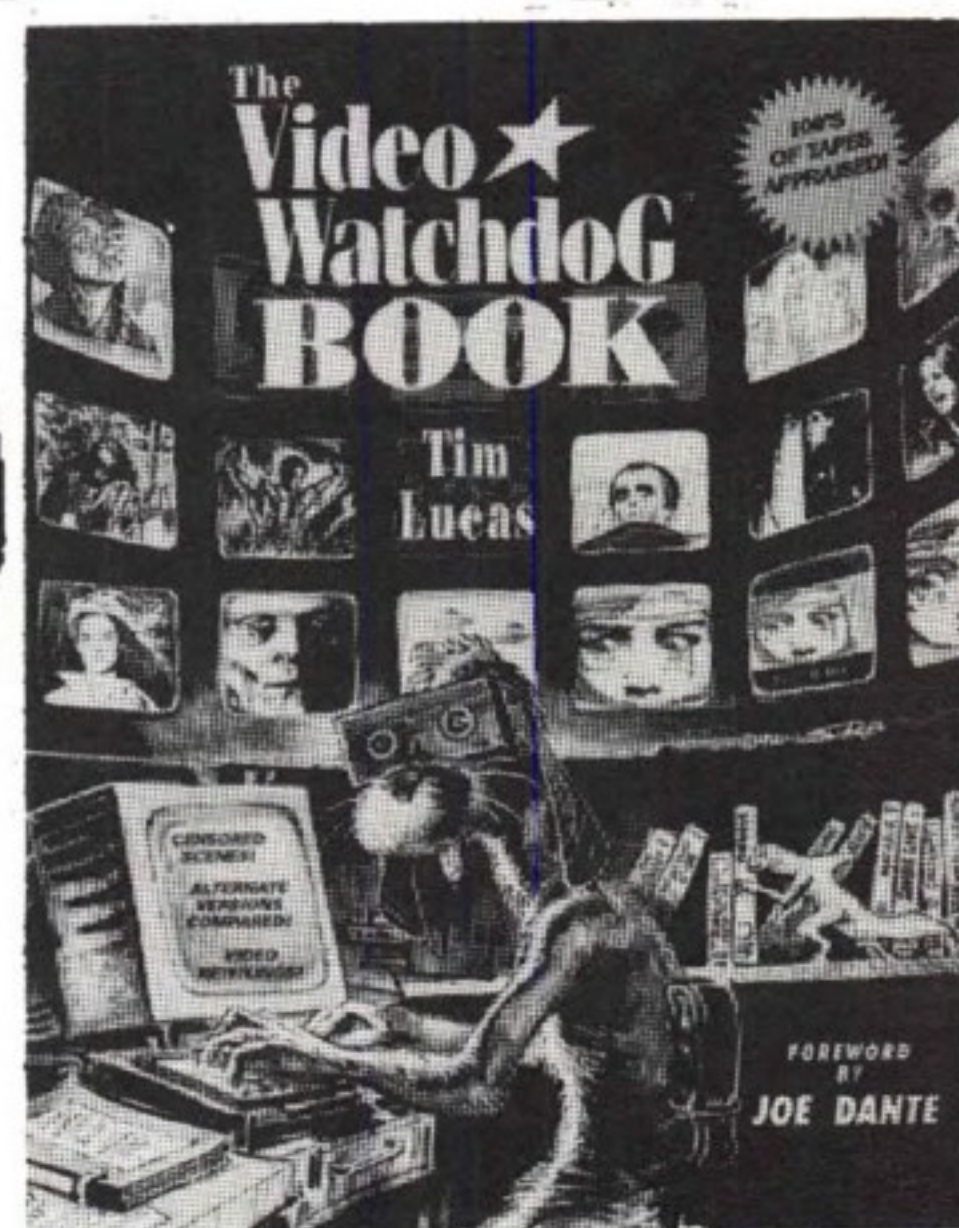


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those issues were
in short supply...
but I didn't believe
them!
(sob)*

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THE LETTERBOX

DR. JENSEN & MR. HYDE

I was thrilled to read Paul M. Jensen's brilliant articles on the US versions of **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE**, having just acquired the 1912 and 1920 Barrymore versions. Mr. Jensen is one of my favorite film historians; **BORIS KARLOFF AND HIS FILMS** is a superb book, and I'm more than happy to see his name in your magazine.

Some years ago, British television aired a print of this film which was almost complete. As the information below will attest, this print contains none of the multiple defects listed by Mr. Jensen in MGM/UA's so-called "restored" tape/disc. In fact, when I received the long-awaited tape from the USA, I was so disappointed that I *erased* it, as the British tape (taken directly from TV) was vastly superior. (It had none of the multiple splices of the US print.)

The twelve "missing moments" in the US cut version (and restored in the MGM laser) are in this British print, except the following three:

6/21:19-38 (19s)

6/21:40-41 (1s)

7/26:47-49 (2s)

Total: 22s

These shots, missing from the British print, are described in VW 18:49-50.

Incidentally, the description of the first "missing British print shot"—as the first garter lands, then the editing cuts back to Ivy as she removes a stocking, then removes her other garter and tosses it, then we have another view of the floor where the second garter falls—seems strange to me, because in the British print (which, as



*Fredric March in Rouben Mamoulian's
DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE (1932).*

I said above, contains the 'cut' version of this scene) the garters fall one after the other on the floor, without a trace of a "jump" in the shot. If the shots of Ivy removing a stocking, etc. was removed from the scene, how do you explain that the *two* garters, in the British print, fall one after the other without any "jump" in the shot?

In any case this British print, although it has three "missing segments" seem much better than the one MGM used for the laser, because there is no jumping in the sound, as far as I can hear (I just watched the tape once again to verify) and, among others, Hyde's admission to Ivy, that he is Jekyll, is perfectly audible. My intuition is that this British print was *never* cut, so the "additional" segments were not "added" to this print, but always in it, so the sound is perfect.

Furthermore, the two short segments described on p. 51—a side view of the bed as Ivy snuggles, pulling the covers over her, and Jekyll picking up the glass before his first transformation—are in the British version.

Perhaps it would be interesting for Mr. Jensen to watch this version, because his comparison of the "cut" and "restored" versions was based on two *American* prints, but perhaps the British print could contain some other segments, even very short ones, cut from the two US prints?! The British PAL tape runs for 91m 20s; the equivalent of 95m 18s. If you add the PAL running time of the three missing segments (21s), it makes a total of 95m 39s.

If you add to the "restored" MGM/UA tape the two pieces of film absent from this restoration,

as described on page 51, it would make a total of 95m 39s + 16s = 95m 55s.

So the difference is 16s. In my account of the British tape, I didn't include the MGM logo. Is *that* the difference?

Jean-Claude Michel
Saint-Ouen, France

Mmmmm, could be! Mark Rodman also wrote to inform us of this more complete British print of Rouben Mamoulian's film, which aired on the BBC's "Film Club" program in 1989. By the way, the description of the garter shot was a misinformed editorial insertion, and not Mr. Jensen's fault.

16 MIL AND WHAT DO YOU GET?

Paul M. Jensen's article about **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE** in VW #18 was especially rewarding. I thought you might be interested in some additional information I have regarding the 81m cut of this film. The 81m version does *not* suffer any of the splices found in the "restored" print which are described on page 51. For example, the 81m version includes the line "Shall I go?" during the garden scene. In addition, Jekyll's response to Ivy, "You'll be alright. Good night." is also in the 81m print. Perhaps most important, however, is the dramatic admission of Hyde, "I am Jekyll!" This is complete, without splices, in the 81m print. Also in the shorter version, the sentence fragment "his money" can be heard clearly.

I was able to double-check this, by using a 16mm print of the 81m version. This makes four additional moments of the film which are found in the 81m edit, but not in the so-called "restored" version. 16mm prints of **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE** are available from Swank Motion Pictures in St. Louis.

Perhaps you already knew this, but Mr. Jensen's article did not make it clear that these splices *don't* exist in the 81m print.

Kevin Klimowski
West Des Moines, Iowa

A LTR FM MRK HL

Yesterday I watched (or tried to) Roger Corman's **THE RAVEN** on WTBS. The print was dark and murky, and really squeezed-in close from the original widescreen. On top of that, it was *slowed down!* TV MOVIES says 86m, and it ran slightly over 89m on TBS. I have (by my own diagnosis) perfect pitch, and I can tell if something is too slow or fast, and I could tell that the voices were off. Visually, fires are good clues, so are ocean waves and crowd scenes; you can see the static movement. TBS is notorious: most of the James Bond movies are time-compressed when they show them. TBS also showed **THE MUNSTERS** both sped up *and* slowed down (certain episodes—why would they *slow down* a 1/2 hour sitcom?) It was so slow even my *mother* made a comment! WGN from Chicago showed **THE 39 STEPS** and **THE DEVIL AND MISS JONES** slowed down! Our local station, Channel 28 from Columbus, looks like they use 16mm prints and the time compressing is sometimes so severe that the picture looks like a child's flip-book!

In addition to letterboxing, we've been seeing the "window-boxing" of older film titles (especially cartoons) on TV. Why do some titles get it and not others? If they windowboxed the whole movie, how much more would we be gaining?

One more thing. In the Fall of 1989, I taped a movie called **LAS VEGAS WEEKEND** from the USA Cable Network. It had a 1987 copyright on it. After the pre-credits sequence, the opening titles, first

scenes and the *music* are nearly identical to the "entering Las Vegas" scenes of **RAINMAN** (which came out at Christmas 1988). If the 1987 date on **LAS VEGAS WEEKEND** is correct, it came *before* **RAINMAN**. **LAS VEGAS WEEKEND** even contains the shot of two characters descending the escalator in new suits!

Mark Hill
Lancaster, OH

All TV sets are overscanned to some degree, and windowboxing allows one to view the entire 1.33 frame as it would appear without overscan. (Before windowboxing, Bugs Bunny's voice was often credited to "Mel Blanc.") The pictorial loss caused by overscanning tends to be exactly that minimal or that crucial, depending on your point of view.

SANTA CLUTCH IS COMING... OUT OF YOUR CHEST!

Your review of **EVIL CLUTCH** states that an R-rated version was shown theatrically, and that the video represents an unedited, unrated version. Rhino Home Video's box says "uncut" on the front, but carries an R-rating on the back. What's going on here?

Your review of **SANTA SANGRE** [VW5:13-14] states that some footage was removed from the film for video release, but does not make it clear whether this amounts to 30s or 3m. In point of fact, **SANTA SANGRE** was issued in R and NC-17 versions by Republic. I am presuming that the NC-17 version (which I have acquired) is uncut, and that the R-rated version is the one missing the aforementioned footage. Is this a correct assumption on my part?

The "incubation chamber" scene from **ALIEN** does *not* contradict the role of the Queen. Although the Queen is the species'

primary method of reproduction, a worker alien is capable, with extraordinary effort, of reproducing itself. This is what the lone creature in **ALIEN** was attempting to do. For more on this, read the three Alan Dean Foster novelizations of the films **ALIEN**, **ALIENS**, and **ALIEN 3**. These books contain extensive detail that is not covered in the films. They also contain whole scenes that did not make the final cut of the films.

To further whet your appetite for these books, let me mention an important fact about **ALIEN 3** that I read, but do not recall from the film. Wonder why Ripley is so extremely upset about the alien growing inside her? Because it is a very special kind of alien: a Queen!

I have purchased and examined both versions of **BRIDE OF RE-ANIMATOR** (Live). Measuring with a Sony VCR with a real-time counter, I have found that the two differ by only one second! (Not 6s as you previously reported.) Watching both, I noticed no difference in the gore or otherwise, except that in the end credits, the unrated version has information about the soundtrack which the R-rated version doesn't. I kid you not. I think we've all been had.

Christopher P. Sheppard
Hudson, OH

Rhino's **EVIL CLUTCH** is available only in its uncut, unrated version; the box is either mistaken or thinking wishfully. Republic Pictures Home Video's **SANTA SANGRE** was cut by 30s to receive its R-rating, which I believe involved the knife-throwing amputation of the tattooed lady's arms and the death of an elephant. When it was released on laserdisc, Alejandro Jodorowsky's 121m film was (here's that word again) time-compressed to 118m, in order to fit the entire program on a single platter. The tape unfolds at the correct speed.

CONAN GROANIN'

I have been a fan of **CONAN THE BARBARIAN** for years, and have written several letters to the director and distributor with no luck. So I'm writing to you as a last resort. Prior to its release in 1982 DeLaurentis was rumored to have cut out 20m of gory footage to get a lower MPAA rating. Is this true? According to an in-depth article in **CINEFANTASTIQUE** Vol. 12 No. 2/3 (I also wrote to its writer Paul Sammon but no reply), I counted 19 filmed scenes that ended up on the cutting room floor. Max Von Sydow's character also confirmed in **FANGORIA** that his gory death scene was cut. Can you shine any light on the subject? You are my last chance. I hope this letter doesn't fall on deaf ears.

J. Scally
Manchester, England

*Paul Sammon (who coincidentally wrote this issue's **BLADE RUNNER** cover story) wants you to know, first of all, that he never received your letter, but he's ready to supply the answers you're looking for. According to Paul, director John Millius was contractually obliged to deliver a two-hour **CONAN** to producer Dino De Laurentiis, but his director's cut was actually closer to two-and-a-half hours. Consequently, he had to sacrifice about 30m of material. Paul reports that Millius' primary deletions were "certain supernatural elements and dialog scenes featuring the Princess (Valerie Quenessen)," who says nary a word in the final cut. As for graphic violence, Millius tended to overcompensate with gore during the production, providing himself with "cuttable" material to make frame-bargaining with the MPAA a less destructive experience. Three particularly memorable gore elements were eliminated: Sandahl Bergman's*

*use of a severed head as a weapon during her attempt (with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jerry Lopez) to rescue Quenessen, a lingering view of some impaled infants (!), and a climactic shot of large snakes gliding in and out of James Earl Jones' severed head. It's unlikely that any of this missing footage will ever see the light of day, unless The Voyager Company decides someday to restore **CONAN** as a "Criterion Collection" laserdisc. Actually, this may not be such a pie-in-the-sky idea, because Paul recently collaborated with Voyager on their forthcoming uncut edition of **ROBOCOP**!*

WHAT? NO BLACK AND BLUE?

Many thanks for the **OBSESSION: THE FILMS OF JESS FRANCO**! It's a beautiful piece of work which will become the definitive Franco tome. I assume the delays at the printers robbed us of the "8 pages of shocking color"? Nonetheless, a handsome volume.

Mark Rodman
Berkeley, Glos., England

Mark is referring to VW's first advertisement for **OBSESSION** [VW 17:77], which mentioned an eight-page color section still planned by the publishers at the time of our deadline. Unexpected last-minute costs led to the scrapping of this feature (which appears in B&W between Pages 166 and 174), but so far, nobody has asked for their money back. In fact, the folks who ordered **OBSESSION** on the basis of that early ad mostly register surprise that it's 50 pages longer than initially promised!

Happy Holidays, Watchdogs, and thanks for all your encouragement and support during 1993!

—Tim & Donna Lucas

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